



ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL

Phil. May 1856







# NIGHTS

ROME VENICE LONDON PARIS

SECOND EDITION

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Painting by J. McLure Hamilton

"J—."



# NIGHTS

ROME      ♦      VENICE  
IN THE ÆSTHETIC EIGHTIES

LONDON      ♦      PARIS  
IN THE FIGHTING NINETIES

BY  
ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS



PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

**J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY**

MCMXVI



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PUBLISHED MARCH, 1916

PRINTED BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY  
AT THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS  
PHILADELPHIA, U. S. A.

## P R E F A C E

**T**HERE are times when we recall old memories much as we take down old favourites from our bookshelves, just to see how they have worn, how they have stood the test of years. Sometimes the books have worn so well that we cannot put them away until we have read every word to the very last again, we have not done with the memories until we have lived again through every moment of the past to which they belong. It is in this spirit that I brought my *Nights* of long ago to the test, and, finding that for me they stand it triumphantly and are still as vivid and vociferous and full of life as they were of old, I have not had the courage to loose my hold upon them and let them drift back once more into unfriendly silence.

It contributes to my pleasure in this revival of my *Nights*, that I have been helped in many ways to give more substantial form to the familiar ghosts who wander through them. My debt of gratitude is great. Mr. William Nicholson has been willing for me to use his portrait of Henley and from Mrs. Henley I have the bust by Rodin. Mr. Frederick H. Evans has lent me the very interesting photograph he made of Beardsley, to

## P R E F A C E

whom he was so good a friend, and to Mr. John Lane, the publisher of the *Yellow Book*, I owe Beardsley's sketch of Harland. To Mr. John Ross I am indebted for the drawing of Phil May by himself never before published, to the Houghton Mifflin Company for the portrait of Vedder, to Mr. Duveneck for the painting of himself by Mr. Joseph de Camp. The photograph of Iwan-Müller and George W. Steevens reminds me of the day so long since when I went with them and Mrs. Steevens to Mr. Frederick Hollyer's and we were all photographed in turn, so that this record of the visit seems surely mine by right. It was Mr. Hollyer, too, who photographed the fine portrait "Bob" Stevenson painted of himself, and it was Mrs. Stevenson who gave me my copy of it. I have Mr. J. McLure Hamilton's permission to publish his portrait of J—, while J— has been so generous with his prints, portraits of old backgrounds of the Nights, that I can add this book to the many in which I have profited by his collaboration. I have also to thank the Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, in which my Nights in Rome and in Venice first appeared, for his consent to their re-publication now in book form.

ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL

3. Adelphi Terrace House, London

December 25, 1915



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**I**  
**DAYS**  
**A WORD TO EXPLAIN**



# N I G H T S

## D A Y S

### A WORD TO EXPLAIN

#### I

**I**F I wrote the story of my days during these last thirty years, it would be the story of hard work. No doubt the work often looked to others uncommonly like play, but it was work all the same.

From the start it must have struck those who did not understand and who were interested, or curious enough to spare a thought, that my principal occupation was to amuse myself. When I was young, in America the "trip to Europe" was considered the crowning pleasure, or symbol of pleasure, within the possibility of hope for even those who were most given to pleasure. In Philadelphia it also stood for money—not necessarily wealth, but the comfortably assured income that made existence behind Philadelphia's spacious red brick fronts the average Philadelphian's right. And it was with this trip that J. and I

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began our life together. But misleading as was the impression made to all whom it did not concern, great satisfaction as it was to my family, who saw in it the ease and comfort it represented to the Philadelphian, we ourselves, with the best will in the world, could imagine it no holiday for us, nor accept it as the symbol of the correct Philadelphia income. Our pleasure was in the fact of the many and definite commissions which obliged us to go to Europe to earn any sort of an income, correct or otherwise—commissions without which we could have faced neither the trip nor marriage. I can remember that during the two or three weeks between our wedding and our sailing we were both kept busy, J. with drawings he had to finish for the *Century*, and I with the last touches to an article for the *Atlantic*. And if the days on the boat gave us breathing space, if not much work, except in preparation, was done, the reason was that the new commissions commenced only with our landing at Liverpool.

From the moment of our arrival in England I see in memory my life by day as one long vista of work. It is mostly a beautiful vista, the more beautiful, I am ready to admit, because the work I owed the beauty to forced me to keep my eyes open and my wits about me. Under the circum-



## DAYS: A WORD TO EXPLAIN

stances, I simply could not afford to let what small powers of observation I possess grow rusty, for, no matter what else might happen, I had to turn my journey into some sort of readable "copy" afterwards. If I know parts of Europe fairly well, I am indebted not to the fashionable need of taking waters, not to following the approved routes of travel, not to meeting my fellow countrymen in hotels as alike as two peas no matter how different the capitals to which they belong, not to any fatuous preference of another country to my own, but to the work that brought us to England and the Continent and has kept us there, with fresh commissions, ever since.

It was work that sent us from end to end of Great Britain and gave me my knowledge of the land. As I look back to those remote days after our arrival in Liverpool, I see J. and myself on an absurd, old-fashioned, long-superannuated Rotary tandem tricycle riding along winding roads and lanes, between the hedgerows and under the elms English prose and verse had long since made familiar, in and out of little grey or red villages clustered round the old church tower, passing through great towns of many factories and high smoke-belching chimneys, halting for months under the shadow of some old castle or

## NIGHTS

cathedral that had been appointed one of our stations by the way. Or I see us both trudging on foot, knapsacks on our backs, climbing up and down the brown and purple hills of the Highlands, circling the peaceful lochs, skirting the swift mountain streams, tramping along the lonely roads of the far Hebrides: summer after summer journeying to the beautiful places the usual tourist in Britain journeys to for pleasure, but where we went because papers and magazines at home, with a wisdom we applauded, had asked us to go and make the drawings and write the articles by which we paid our way in the world.

And it was work that sent us from end to end of France, and now in looking back I see J. and myself on the neat, compact Humber tandem,—then so new-fashioned, to-day as outmoded as the Rotary,—riding along straight poplared roads, through well-ordered forests and over wild hills, between vineyards, one year under the grey skies of Flanders or among the lagoons of Picardy and another under the brilliant sunshine of Provence or through the rich pastures of the sweet Bourbonnais, in and out of ancient villages and towns as full of romance as their names, with halts as long under the shadow of still nobler churches and fairer castles, getting

## DAYS: A WORD TO EXPLAIN

to know the people and their ways and how pleasant life is in the land where beauty and thrift, gaiety and toil, courtesy and wit, go ever hand in hand.

And again it was work that sent us still further south, to Italy which in my younger years I had longed for the more because I fancied it as inaccessible to me as Lhasa or the Grande Chartreuse. And again down the beautiful vista of work I see J. and myself still on the neat compact Humber, but now pushing up long white zigzags to grim hill-towns, rushing down the same zigzags into radiant valleys of fruit and flowers, winding between vineyards where the vines were festooned from tree to tree, and fields where huge, white, wide-horned oxen pulled the plough, bumping over the stones of old Roman roads, parting with the wonderful tandem only for the long stay in wonderful Rome and wonderful Venice.

And again it was work that sent us, now each on a safety bicycle—a change that explains how time was flying—by the canals and on the flat roads of Belgium and Holland; into Germany, through the Harz with Heine for guide, by the castled Rhine and Moselle that may have lost their reputation for a while but that can never

## NIGHTS

lose their loveliness; into Austria, on to Hungary, up in the Carpathians and to those heights from which the Russian Army but the other day looked down upon the Hungarian plain; into Spain, to sun-burnt Andalusia, for weeks in the Alhambra, to windy Madrid, for days in the Prado; into Switzerland, the "Playground of Europe," where our work must have seemed more than ever like play as we climbed, on our cycles and on foot, over the highest of the high Alpine passes, one after the other; again into Italy; again into France; again through England; again—but they were too numerous to count, all those journeys that claimed so many of my days and taught me, while I worked, all I have learned of Europe.

Of such well-travelled roads anyway, it may be said people have heard as much as people can stand, and therefore I am wise to hold my peace about days spent upon them. But on the best-travelled road adventure lies in wait for the traveller who seeks it, chance awaits the discoverer who knows his business. Why, to this day J. and I are appealed to for facts about Le Puy because a quarter of a century ago we made our discovery of the town as the Most Picturesque Place in the World and sought our ad-

## DAYS: A WORD TO EXPLAIN

venture by proclaiming the fact in print. But our discoveries might have been greater, our adventures more daring, and I should be silent about them now for quite another and far more sensible reason, and this is that I was not silent at the time. The tale of those old days is told.

### II

Other journeys I made had no less an air of holiday-taking and meant no less hard labour. For most men work is bounded by the four walls of the office or the factory, or the shop, or the school, and rigidly regulated by hours, and they consequently suspect the amateur or the dawdler in the artist or writer who works where and when and as he pleases. Journalism has led me into pleasant places but never by the path of idleness. Rare has been the month of May that has not found me in Paris, not for the sunshine and gaiety that draw the tourist to it in that gay sunlit season, but for industrious days, with my eyes and catalogue and note-book, in the *Salons*. Few have been the International Exhibitions, from Glasgow to Ghent, from Antwerp to Venice, that I have missed, and if in my devoted attendance I might easily have been mistaken for the tireless pleasure-seeker, if I got what fun I could at odd



## NIGHTS

moments out of my opportunities, never was I without my inseparable note-book and pencil in my hand or in my pocket, never without good, long, serious articles to be written in my hotel bedroom. Even in London when I might have passed for the idlest stroller along Bond Street or Piccadilly on an idle afternoon, oftener than not I have been bound for a gallery somewhere with the prospect of long hours' writing as the result of it. But though the task varied, the tale of these days as well has been told, and has duly appeared in the long columns of many a paper, in the long articles of many a magazine.

### III

As time went on, my journeys were fewer and J. took his oftener by himself. A new variety of task was set me that left so little leisure for the galleries that I gave up "doing" them for my London papers. My days went to the making of books which, whether I wrote them alone or in collaboration with J., required my undivided attention. When these were such books as the *Life of My Uncle, Charles Godfrey Leland*, or the *Life of Whistler*, they called for research, days of reading in the Art Library at South Kensington, the British Museum, the London Li-

## DAYS: A WORD TO EXPLAIN

brary, days of seeing people and places, days of travelling, days of correspondence, days upon days at my desk writing—these days crowded with interesting incident, curious surprises, amusing talk, hours of hope, hours of black despair—in their own way days of discovery and adventure. But in this case again the tale has been told and I am not so foolish as to sit down and tell it anew, sorely as I may be tempted. Anybody who reads further will find that the principal truth my nights have revealed to me is that the man who is interested—really interested—in something, does not want to talk, and often cannot think, about anything else. But it does not follow that he can make sure of listeners as keen to hear about it. The writer may, in his enthusiasm, write the same book twice, but even if it prove a “best-seller” the first time, he runs a risk the second of seeing it disposed of as a remainder.

### IV

So it has been throughout my working life: my day's task has had no other object than to get itself chronicled in print. If *what* the work was that filled my day is not known, it could not interest anybody were I to write about it now. If

## NIGHTS

*how* I worked during all those long hours is to me an all-absorbing subject and edifying spectacle, I am not so vain as not to realize that I must be the only person to find it so. Most men—and women too—were brought into the world to work, but most of them would be so willing to shirk the obligation that the best they ask is to be allowed to forget their own labours while they can, and not to be bothered with a report of other people's. By nature I am inclined to Charles Lamb's belief that a man—or a woman—cannot have too little to do and too much time to do it in. But necessity having forced me to give over my days to work, it happens that I, personally, would from sheer force of habit find days without it a bore. However, I would not, for that reason, argue that work is its own reward to any save the genius, or that methods of work are of importance to any save the workman who employs them.

Whatever man's endurance may be, I know one weak woman whose powers of work are limited. There was never anybody to regulate my day of work save myself, since I am glad to say it has not been my lot to waste the golden years of my life in an office, and I am not the stern task-master or tiresome trade-unionist who



## DAYS: A WORD TO EXPLAIN

insists upon so many hours and so much work in them, and will make not an inch of allowance either more or less. Sometimes my hours were more, sometimes they were less, but always my energy was apt to slacken with the slackening of the day. I never found inspiration in the midnight oil and oceans of coffee. I have always wanted my solid eight hours of sleep, and would not shrink from nine or ten if they fitted in with a worker's life. Youth often gave me the courage I have not now to take up work again—a promised article, necessary reading, making notes, copying—at night. But youth never induced me to rely upon this night work if I could help it. My nearest approach to a rule was that at the end of the day I was at liberty to play, that my nights at least could be free of work.

The play to many might pass for a mild form of mild amusement, for it usually consisted in nothing more riotous than meeting my friends and talking with them. But I confess that the talk and the quality of it, the meeting and its informality did strike me as so singularly stimulating as to verge upon the riotous. The manner of playing was entirely new to me in the beginning. All conventions bind with a heavy chain, but none with a heavier than the Philadelphia

## NIGHTS

variety. Spruce Street nights had never been so free and so vociferous and so late, and, being a good Philadelphian, I am not sure if the nights that succeeded have yet lost for me their novelty. As a consequence, if, in looking back, my days appear to be wholly monopolized by work, my nights seem consecrated as wholly to amusement. The poet's "hideous" is the last adjective I could apply to the night my busy day sank into.

How I worked may concern nobody save myself, but how I played I cannot help hoping has a wider interest. Those old nights were typical of a period, and they threw me with many people, contemporaries of J.'s and mine, who did much to make that period what it was. The nights as gay, as stimulating, that I have spent in other people's houses I have not the courage to recall except in the utmost privacy. Pepys and N. P. Willis in their time, no less than a whole army of Pamelas and Priscillas in ours, have shown the lengths and indiscretions to which so intimate a breach of hospitality may lead. I have had my experience. For some years a house with closely curtained windows has reproached me daily for not understanding that the man who invites the world to stare at him and is not happy if it won't, objects when his neighbours say lightly what

## DAYS: A WORD TO EXPLAIN

they see. I am every bit as afraid to speak openly of those people who shared our nights and who, with us, have outlived them. Cowardice long since convinced me that it is not of the dead, but of the living, only good should be spoken—and if good cannot be spoken, what then? However, it is not in pursuit of problems that I have busied myself in reviving those old nights, but rather for the pleasure we all of us have, as the years go on, in feeling our way back along the Corridors of Time and living our past over again in memory. If I go further and live mine over again in print, it is because I like to think the fault will not lie with me if it altogether dies—I have given it, anyway, the chance of a longer lease of life.



II  
NIGHTS  
IN ROME



## IN ROME

### I

**I**T will give an idea of what ages ago those nights were, and of the youth I brought to them, if I say that I arrived in Rome on the first tandem tricycle ever seen in Italy.

I can look back to it now with pride, for I was, in my way, a pioneer, but there was not much to be proud about at the time. Rome was so little impressed that J., my fellow pioneer, and I,—J. and I who in every town on the way from Florence had been the delight of the gaping crowd, J. and I who in all those beautiful October days on the white roads of Italy had suffered from nothing save the excess of the people's amiable attentions,—scarcely showed ourselves beyond the *Porta del Popolo* and the Piazza of the same name, before we were arrested for driving the tandem furiously through the *Corso*—as if anybody could drive anything furiously through the *Corso* at the hour before sunset, when all the world comes home from the *Borghese*. But two policemen, drawing their swords as if they meant business, commanded us to dismount and, between them, we walked ignominiously to

## NIGHTS

the hotel, pushing the tricycle ; and an astonished and not in the least admiring crowd followed ; and the policeman asked us for a *lira*, which we refused, taking it for a proof of the corruption of modern Rome—and they were so within their legal rights that I do not care to say for how many more than one we were asked a few weeks later by the Syndic, whom we could not refuse ; and altogether I do not think we were to blame if, after the policemen and the swords and the crowd had gone and the tricycle was locked up, and we wandered from the hotel in the gathering dusk, we were the two most ill-tempered young people who ever set out to enjoy their first night in Rome.

Nor was our temper improved when J.'s instinct, which in a strange place takes him straight where he wants to go, having got us into the *Ghetto*, failed to get us out again. The *Ghetto* itself was all right, so what a *Ghetto* ought to be that had I been the Romans, I would not have pulled it down, I would have preserved it as a historical monument,—dirty, dark and mysterious, a labyrinth of narrow crooked streets, lined with tall grim houses, filled with melodramatic shadows and dim figures skulking in them, but a nightmare of a labyrinth which kept bringing us



## NIGHTS: IN ROME

forever back to the same spot. And we could not dine on picturesqueness, and we would not have dined in any of the murderous-looking houses at any price, and at last J. admitted that there were times when a native might be a better guide than instinct, and in his best Italian he asked the way of two men who were passing. One, who wore the tweeds and flannel shirt by which in calmer moments we must have recognized him, pulled the other by the sleeve and growled in English: "Come on, don't bother about the beastly foreigners!" I can afford to forgive him to-day when I remember what his incivility cost him not only that night, when we would not let him off until he had shown us out of the *Ghetto*, but on a succession of our nights in Rome, Fate having neatly arranged that at the one house whose doors were opened to us he should be a constant visitor.

Other doors might have opened had we had the clothes in which to knock at them. But we had come to Rome for four days with no more baggage than the tandem could carry, and we stayed four months without adding to it. We could have sent for our trunks, of course, or we could have bought new things in the Roman shops, but we did neither, I can hardly say why except that the story of our journey had to be

## NIGHTS

finished, and other delightful articles we had crossed the Atlantic to do were waiting, and these were commissions that could not be neglected, since they were the capital upon which we had started out on our married life five months before. And our Letter of Credit was small, and Youth is stern with itself;—or, more likely, we did not trouble simply because it saved so much more trouble not to. No woman would have to be taught by Ibsen or anybody else how to live her own life, were she willing to live it in shabby clothes. It is not an easy thing to do, I know. I share the weakness of most women in feeling it a disgrace, or a misfortune, to be caught in the wrong clothes in the right place. But that year in Rome I had not outgrown the first ardours of work and, besides, in the old days, a cycle seemed an excuse for any and all degrees of shabbiness. In my short skirts, at a time when short skirts were not the mode, covered with mud, and carrying a tiny bag, I have walked into the biggest hotels of Europe without a tremor, conscious that the cycle at the door was my triumphant apology. The cyclist's dress, like the nun's uniform, was a universal passport, and I have never had the cleverness to invent another to replace it since I gave up cycling.

## NIGHTS: IN ROME

### II

If we could not spend our nights in other people's houses, neither could we spend them in the rooms we had taken for ourselves at the top of one of the highest houses on the top of one of the highest hills in Rome. There was no objection to the rooms: they were charming, but we had found them on a warm November day when the sun was streaming in through the windows that looked far and wide over the town, and beyond to the *Campagna*, and still beyond to a shining line on the horizon we knew was the Mediterranean, and we did not ask about anything save the price, which to our surprise we could pay, and so we moved in at once. Nor for days, as we sat at our work in the sunlight, the windows open and Rome at our feet, did we imagine there could be anything to ask about, except if, by asking, we could prevail upon the *Padrona's* son-in-law to go and blow his melancholy cornet anywhere rather than on the roof directly over our heads. Living in rooms was the nearest approach I had made in all my life to housekeeping, I was still in a state of wonderment at everything in Rome, from Romulus and Remus on the morning pat of butter to the November roses in full bloom on the Pincian, I

## NIGHTS

was quite content to let practical affairs and domestic details look out for themselves—or, perhaps it would be more true to say that I never gave them a thought.

But even in Rome the sun must set and November nights grow chill, and a night came when, after a day of rain, a fire would have been pleasant, and suddenly we discovered there was no place to make it in. It had never occurred to us that there could not be, fresh as we were from the land where heat in the house is as much a matter of course as a sun in the sky. At first we wrapped ourselves in shawls and blankets, hired the *padrona's* biggest *scaldino*, and called it an experience. After a few evenings we decided it was an experience we could do without and, like all miserable Romans who have no fireplace, we settled down to spending our nights in the restaurants and *cafés* of Rome.

I doubt if I should care to spend my nights that way now; a quarter of a century has added unexpected charm to a dinner-table and fireside of my own; but no Arabian Nights could then have been fuller of entertainment than the Roman Nights that drove us from home in search of warmth and food. In Philadelphia there never had been a suspicion of chance, a shadow





Etching by Joseph Pennell

OLD AND NEW ROME



## NIGHTS: IN ROME

of adventure about my dinner. It was as inevitable as six o'clock and as inevitably eaten in the seclusion of the Philadelphia second-story back-building dining-room, if not of my family, then of one or another of my friends. In Rome it became a delightful uncertainty that transformed the six flights of stairs leading to it from our rooms into the "Road to Anywhere." That road was by no means an easy one to climb up again and if we could help it, we never climbed down more than once a day, usually a little before dusk, a few hours earlier when we were in a rare holiday mood, and always in time for a long or short tramp before dinner. If we came to a church we dropped into it, or a gallery, or a palace, or a garden, when we were in time. We followed the streets wherever they might lead,—along the brand-new *Via Nazionale* to the Forum or the narrow alleys to St. Peter's, beyond the gates to the *Campagna*—seeing a good deal of Rome without setting out deliberately to see anything. When we were hungry, we stopped at the first *Trattoria* we passed, provided it looked as if we could afford it, and the chance dinner in a chance place at a chance hour was the biggest adventure of all that had crowded the way to it.

One night the *Trattoria* happened to be the

## NIGHTS

*Posta* in a narrow street back of the *Piazza Colonna*. It was small: not more than twenty could have dined there together in any comfort. It was beautifully clean. And the *padrone*, his son, and the one waiter—all the establishment—greeted us with that enchanting smile to which, during my first year in Italy, I fell only too ready a victim. Once we had dined at the *Posta*, we found it so pleasant that we fell into the habit of getting hungry in its neighbourhood.

I have since got to know many more famous or pretentious restaurants, but never have diners tasted so good as at this little Roman *trattoria* where we had to consider the *centesimi* in the price of every dish, and the quarter of a flask of cheap *Chianti* shared between us was an extravagance, and we ate with the appetite that came of having eaten nothing all day save rolls and coffee for breakfast, and fruit and rolls for lunch, that we might afford a dinner at night. And I have dined in many restaurants of gilded and mirrored magnificence, but in none I thought so well decorated as the *Posta* with its bare walls and coarse clean linen and no ornament at all, except the stand in the centre where we could pick out our fruit or our vegetable. Nor has any restaurant, crowded with the creations of



## NIGHTS: IN ROME

Paquin and Worth, seemed more brilliant than the *Posta* filled with officers. In Philadelphia I had never seen an army officer in uniform in my life; at the *Posta* I saw hardly anything else. We were surrounded by lieutenants and captains and colonels, and as I watched them come and go with clank and clatter of spurs and swords, and military salutes at the door, and military cloaks thrown dramatically off and on, and gold braid shining, I began to think a big standing army worth the money to any country, on condition that it always went in uniform—on condition, I might now add, that this uniform is not khaki, then not yet heard of. When the old spare, grizzled General, always the last, appeared and all the other officers rose upon his entrance, our dinner was dignified into a ceremony. Sometimes, I fancied he felt his importance more than anybody, for he is the only man I have ever known courageous enough in public to begin his dinner with cake and finish it with soup.

Now and then, on very special occasions, when we had sent off an article or received a cheque, we went to the *Falcone* and celebrated the event by feasting on *Maccheroni alla Napolitana*, *Cinghiale all'Agra Dolce* and wine of Orvieto. The *Falcone* was another accident of our tramps,

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though we afterwards found it starred in Baedeker. It looked the centuries old it was said to be, such a shabby, sombre crypt of a restaurant that I accepted without question the tradition it cherished of itself as a haunt of the Cæsars, and was prepared to believe the waiters when they pointed out the mark of the Imperial head on the greasy walls, just as the waiters of the Cheshire Cheese in London point to the mark of Dr. Johnson's, while the flamboyancy of the cooking revealed to me the real reason of the decline and fall of Rome. I am afraid I should be telling the story of our own decline and fall had we sent off articles and received cheques every day. Fortunately, the intervals were long between the feasts, but unfortunately our digestion can never again be imperilled at the *Falcone*, for they tell me it has gone with the *Ghetto* and so many other things in the Rome I knew and loved.

By the middle of the winter we gave up the *Posta* and went to the *Cavour* instead. I don't know how we had the heart to, for the *Cavour* never had the same charm for us, we never got to like it so well. It was too large and popular for friendliness, the officers carried their ceremony and gorgeousness to a room apart, and

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the *padrone* and his waiters were too busy for more than one fixed smile of general welcome. But then there, if we paid for our dinner by the month, it cost us next to nothing by the day, and our Letter of Credit allowed as narrow a margin for sentiment as for clothes. Moreover, the dinner was good as well as cheap. And when the streets of Rome were rivers of rain, as they often were that winter, it was brought to our rooms in a dinner pail by a waiter, after he had first come half a mile to submit the *menu* to us, and in that cold, bleak interior, wrapped in blankets, a *scaldino* at our feet, a newspaper for tablecloth, we made a picnic of it, freezing, but thankful not to be drowned. And on great holidays, the *padrone* spared us a smile all to ourselves as he offered us, with the compliments of the season, a plate of *torrone* and a bottle of old wine from his vineyard.

### III

With dinner the night was but beginning and smiles must have faded had we lingered over it indefinitely. I learned to my astonishment, however, that hours could be, or rather were expected to be, devoted to the drinking of one small cup of coffee, and that always near the *trattoria* was

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a *café* \* which provided the coffee and, at the cost of a few cents, could become our home for as long and as late as might suit us. In Philadelphia after dinner coffee had been swallowed promptly, in the back parlour if we were dining alone, in the front if people were dining with us, and I was startled to find it in Rome an excuse to loaf at a convenient distance from the domestic hearth for Romans with apparently nothing to do and all their time to do it in.

It is an arrangement I take now as a matter of course. But then, it must be borne in mind, for me only five months separated Rome from Philadelphia, and Philadelphia bonds are not easily broken. I suspected something wrong in so agreeable a custom, as youth usually does in the pleasant things of life, and as a Philadelphian always does in the unaccustomed, and at first, when we went to the ancient *Greco*, I tried to believe it was entirely the result of J.'s interest in a place where artists had drunk coffee for generations. When we deserted it because, despite its traditions, nobody went there any longer save

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\* *Note*.—Let me anticipate the amiable critic—and say that I know this is not the Italian spelling of *café*. I use the French spelling here, as in later chapters where it belongs, for the sake of uniformity throughout.

## NIGHTS: IN ROME

a few grey-bearded old men and a few gold-laced hall porters, and the dulness fell like a pall upon us, and the atmosphere was rank, and when we patronized instead a brand-new *café* in the *Corso* that called itself in French the *Café de Venise* and in English the *Meet of Best Society*, I put down the attraction to the *Daily News*, to which the *café* subscribed, and for which in those days Andrew Lang was writing the leaders everybody was reading. But Lang could not reconcile us to the nightly *Gran Concerto* of a piano, a flute and a violin of indifferent merit concealed in a thicket of artificial trees, and the *Best Society* meant tourists, and after we had shocked a family of New England friends by inviting them to share its tawdry pleasures with us, and after a few evenings had given us, unaccompanied, all and more than we could stand of it, we exchanged it for a *café* without a past and with no aspirations as the *Meet* of any save the usual *café* society of a big Italian town. By this time I had ceased to worry about excuses and had settled down to idleness and coffee with as little scruple as the natives.

The *café* we chose was the *Nazionale Aragno* in the *Corso*, the largest and most gorgeous in Rome. The three or four rooms that opened one



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out of the other had a magnificence that we could never have achieved in furnished rooms and would not have wanted to if we could, and a succession of mirrors multiplied them indefinitely. We leaned luxuriously against blue plush, gilding glittered wherever gilding could on white walls, waiters rushed about with little shining nickel-plated trays held high above their heads, spurs and swords clanked and clattered, by the middle of the evening not a table was vacant.

It was simply the usual big Continental *café*, but to me as new and strange as everything else in the wonderful life in the wonderful world into which I had strayed from the old familiar ways of Philadelphia, with a long halt between only in England where the *café* does not exist. To the marble-topped tables, the gilding, mirrors and plush, novelty lent a charm they have never had since and probably would soon have lost had we been left to contemplate them in solitary state, as it seemed probable we should. For we knew nobody in Rome except Sandro, the youthful enthusiastic Roman cyclist we had picked up in Montepulciano, cycled with through the Val di Chiana on a sunny October Sunday, and run across again in Rome where he amiably showed us the hospitality of the capital by occasionally

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drinking coffee with us at our expense, and by once introducing a friend, a tall, slim, good-looking young man of such elegance of manner and such a princely air of condescension, that Sandro himself was impressed and joined us again, later on the same evening, to explain our privilege in having entertained the Queen's hair-dresser un-awares. Foreigners did not often find their way into the *Nazionale*. They were almost as few in number as women, who were very few, for as women in Rome never dined,—or so I gathered from my observations at the *Posta*, the *Falcone* and the *Cavour*,—they never drank coffee. Only on Sundays would they descend upon the *café* with their husbands and children, and then it was to devour ices and cakes at a rate that convinced me they devoured little else from one Sunday to the next. When I asked for the *Times*—they took the *Times* at the *Nazionale*—the waiter almost invariably answered: “It reads itself, the *Signore Tedesco* has it,” and the *Signore Tedesco*, a mild German student who for his daily lesson in English read the advertisement columns from beginning to end, was the only foreigner who appeared regularly at any table save our own.

And yet at ours, before I could say how it

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came about, a little group collected, and every evening in the furthest room J. and I began to hold an informal reception which gave us all the advantages of social life and none of its responsibilities. We could preside in the travel-worn tweeds of cycling and not bother because we were not dressed; we could welcome our friends the more cordially because, as we did not provide the entertainment, it was no offence to us if they did not like it, nor to them if we failed to sit it out. In the *café* we found the "oblivion of care," the same "freedom from solitude," though not the big words to express it, which Dr. Johnson "experienced" in a tavern. Were all social functions run on the same broad principles, society would not be half the strain it is upon everybody's patience and good-nature and purse.

Almost all the group were artists. In those days artists and students were no longer rushing to Rome as the one place to study art in, nor had the effort begun to revive its old reputation among them. Still a good many were always about. Some lived there, others, like ourselves, were spending the winter, or else were just passing through, and, once we had collected the group



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round our table, I do not believe we were ever left to pass an evening alone.

Artists were as great a novelty to me as the *café*—I had been married so short a time that J. had not ceased to be a problem, if he ever has—and nothing was more amazing to me than the talk. Its volubility took my breath away. I thought of the back parlour at home after dinner, my Father playing interminable games of Patience, the rest of us deep in our books until bedtime. And these men talked as if talk was the only business, the only occupation of life.

Still more surprising was the subject of their talk. If they had so much to say that it made me grateful I was born a listener, they had only one thing to say it about. It was art from the moment we met until we parted, though we might sit over our coffee for hours. Often it was next morning when J. and I reached the house at the top of the hill, and he dragged the huge key from his pocket, undid the ponderous lock and struck the overgrown match, or undersized candle, by which the Roman lit himself to his rooms, and we panted up our six flights afraid ours would not last, for we had but the one supplied by the restaurant.

The quality of the talk was as amazing: bewildering, revolutionary, to anybody who had

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never heard art talked about by artists, as I never had before I met J. All I had thought right turned out to be wrong, all I had never thought of was right, all that was essential to the critic of art, to the Ruskin-bred, had nothing to do with it whatever. History, dates, periods, schools, sentiment, meaning, attributions, Morelli only as yet threatening to succeed Ruskin as prophet of art, were not worth discussion or thought. The concern was for art as a trade—the trade which creates beauty; the vital questions were treatment, colour, values, tone, mediums. The price of pictures and the gains of artists, those absorbing topics of the great little men in England to-day, were never mentioned: the man who sold was looked down on, rather. There were nights when I went away believing that nothing mattered in the world except the ground on a copper plate, or the grain of a canvas, or the paint in a tube, so long and heated and bitter had been the controversy over it. They might all be artists, but they were of a hundred opinions as to the exact meaning of right and wrong, and they could wrangle over mediums until the German student looked up in reproof from his columns of advertisements and the Romans shrugged their shoulders at the curious manners and short tempers of the *for-*

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*estiere*. But there was one point upon which I never knew them not to be of one mind, and this was the supreme importance of art. If I ventured to disagree—which I was far too timid to do often—they were down upon me like a flash, abusing me for being so blind as not to see the truth in Rome, of all places, where of a tremendous past nothing was left but the work of the masters who built and adorned the city, or who sang and chronicled its splendours.

### IV

The noise of their talk is still loud in my ears, but many of the talkers have grown dim in my memory. Of some of the older men I cannot recall the faces, not even the names; some of the younger I remember better, partly I suppose because they were young and starting out in life with us, partly because one or two later on made their names heard of by many people outside of the *Nazionale* and far beyond Rome.

I could not easily forget the young Architect who was then getting ready to conquer Philadelphia—to borrow a phrase from Zola, as seems but appropriate in writing of the Eighties—for which great end all the knowledge of the *Beaux-Arts* could not have served him as well as his con-

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viction that the architecture of Europe had waited for him to discover it. He had never been abroad before and he could not believe that anybody else had. He would come to our little corner from his prowls in Rome and tell men, who had lived there for more years than he had hours, all about the churches and palaces and galleries, like a new Columbus revealing to his astonished audience the wonders of a New World. And it amused me to see how patiently the older men listened, sparing his illusions, no doubt because they heard in his ardent, confident, decidedly dictatorial voice the voice of their own youth calling. He carried his convictions home with him unspoiled, and his first building—a hospital or something of the kind—was a monument to his discoveries, a record of his adventures among the masterpieces of Europe, beginning on the ground floor as the Strozzi Palace, developing into various French castles, and finishing on the top as a Swiss *châlet*, atrocious as architecture, but amusing as autobiography. All his buildings were more or less reminiscent, and told again in stone the story so often told in words at the *Nazionale*, for Death was kind and claimed him before he had ceased to be the discoverer to become himself.

Donoghue too has gone, Donoghue the sculp-

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tor who as I knew him in Rome was so overflowing with life, so young that I felt inclined to credit him with the gift of immortal youth, so big and handsome and gay that wherever he went laughter went with him. He too was a discoverer, but his discovery was of Paris and the Latin Quarter. It had filled a year between Chicago, where he had been Oscar Wilde's discovery, and Rome, and he had had time to work off his first fantastic exuberance as discoverer before I met him. "Donoghue is all right," they would say of him at the *Nazionale*; "he has got past the brass buttons and pink swallow tail stage, even if he does cling to low collars and tight pants and spats."

Certainly, he had got so far as to think he ought to be beginning to work, and he was in despair because he could not find in Rome a youth as beautiful as himself to pose for his Young Sophocles. To listen to him was to believe that Narcissus had come to life again. We would meet him during our afternoon rambles in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, when he would stop and take half an hour to assure us he hadn't time to stop, he was hunting for a model he had just heard of, and then he would drop into the *Nazionale* at night to report his want of progress,



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for no model ever came up to his standard. He referred to his own beauty with the frank simplicity and vanity of a child—a real Post-Impressionist; not one by pose, for there was not a trace of pose in him. I wish I could say how astonishing he was to me. Life has since thrown many young artists and writers my way and I am used to their conceits and affectations and splendid belief in themselves. But my experience then was of the most limited and bound by Philadelphia convention, and I cannot imagine a greater contrast than between the Philadelphia youth to whom I was accustomed, talking of the last reception and the next party over his chicken salad at the Dancing Class, and Donoghue talking dispassionately of his own surpassing beauty over a small cup of coffee at the *Nazionale*.

Donoghue was a child, not merely in his vanity, but in everything, with the schoolboy's sense of fun. I never knew him happier than the evening he hurried to the *café* from his visit to the Coliseum by moonlight to tell us of his joke on the Americans he found waiting there in silence for the guide's announcement that the moon was in the proper place for their proper emotion. A friend was with him.

“And I said: ‘*Sprichst du Deutsch?*’ very loud

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as we passed," was Donoghue's story. "And he answered as loud as he could: '*Nichts! Nichts!*' And I said: '*Zwei Bier,*' and of course the Americans took us for Germans. Then we hid in the shadows a little further on and we both yelled together at the top of our voices, 'Three cheers for Cleveland!' and the Americans jumped, and they forgot the moon, and they wouldn't listen to the guide, and I tell you it was just great."

I was not overcome myself with the wit or humour of the jest, but Donoghue was, and he roared with laughter until none of us could help roaring with him in sheer sympathy. He was as enchanted with his method of learning Italian. He was reading Wilkie Collins and Bret Harte in an Italian translation, and when he yawned in our faces and left the *café* early, it was because the night before the Dago's *Woman in White* or *Luck of Roaring Camp* had kept him up until long after dawn, though really he knew it was a waste of time since anybody had only to get himself half seas over and he'd talk any darned lingo in the world.

He joined us less often after he gave up the hopeless hunt for the model who never was found and whom it would have been useless anyway

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to find, for Donoghue always spent his quarter's allowance the day he got it, and most models could not wait three months to be paid. To this conclusion he came soon after the first of the year and settled down seriously to posing for himself and, as the world knows, the Young Sophocles was finished in the course of time and a very fine statue it is said to be. But even if he did desert our table he would still seem to me in memory the centre of the little group gathered about it, had it not been for Forepaugh.

Of course his name was not Forepaugh—though something very like it—but Forepaugh answers my every purpose. For though I did know his name I did not know then, and I do not know now, who he was and why he was. I do not think anybody ever knew anything about him except that he was Forepaugh, which meant, according to his own reckoning, the most wonderful person on earth. He was one of the sort of men whose habit is to turn up wherever you may happen to be, in whatever part of the world, with no apparent reason for being there except to talk to you,—the last time we met was in a remote corner of Kensington Gardens in London, where he took up the talk just where we had left off at the *Nazionale* in Rome—and as it is years since he



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has turned up anywhere to talk to us, I fear he has joined the Philadelphia Architect and Donoghue where he will talk no more.

In sheer physical power of speech he was without a rival and none surpassed him in appreciation of his eloquence. His interest never flagged so long as he held the floor, though when we wanted him to listen to us, he did not attempt to conceal his indifference. We could not tell him anything, for there was nothing about which he did not know more than we could hope to. He, at any rate, had no doubt of his own omniscience. Judging from the intimate details with which he regaled us, he was equally in the confidence of the Vatican and the Quirinal, equally at home with the Blacks and the Whites. The secrets of the Roman aristocracy were his, he was the first to hear the scandals of the foreign colony. The opera depended upon his patronage and balls languished without him, though I could never understand how or why, so rarely did he leave us to enjoy them. Every archæologist, every scholar, every historian in Rome appealed to him for help, and as for art, it was folly for others to pretend to speak of it in his presence. He called himself an artist and for a time he used to go with J. to Gigi's, the life school where artists then in Rome

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often went of an afternoon to draw from the model. But J. never saw him there with as much as a scrap of paper or a pencil in his hands, and nobody ever saw him at work anywhere. For what he did not do he made up by telling us of what he might do. His were the pictures unpainted which, like the songs unsung, are always the best. He condescended to approve of the Old Masters, assured that the masterpieces he might choose to produce must rank with theirs, but he never forgot the great gulf fixed between himself and the Modern Masters, whose pictures were worthy of his approval only when he had been their inspiration. It was fortunate for American Art that scarcely an American artist could be named whom Forepaugh had not inspired. And if he praised Abbey and Millet more than most, it was because he had posed for both and could answer for it that Millet's porch, or studio, or dining-room, which had had the honour of serving as his background, was as true as the figure of himself set against it.

Like all talkers who know too much, Forepaugh had, what Carlyle called, a terrible faculty for developing into a bore. Some of our little group would run when they saw him at the door, others took malicious pleasure in interrupting

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him and suddenly changing the conversation in the hope to catch him tripping. But out of all such tests he came triumphantly. I never thought him more wonderful than the evening when somebody abruptly began to talk about Theosophy in the middle of one of his confidences about the Italian Court. It was no use. Without stopping to take breath, at once Forepaugh began to tell us the most marvellous theosophical adventures, which he knew not by hearsay, but because he had passed through them himself. We might express an opinion: he stated facts. And it seemed that he had no more intimate friend than Sinnett, and that to Sinnett he had confessed his scepticism, asking for a sign, a manifestation, and that one afternoon when they were smoking over their coffee and cognac after lunch in Sinnett's chambers, then on the third floor of a house near the Oxford Street end of Bond Street—Forepaugh was carefully exact in his details—Sinnett smiled mysteriously but said nothing except to warn him to hold on tight to the table. And up rose the table, with the litter of coffee cups, cigars, and cognac, up rose the two chairs, one at either end with Sinnett and Forepaugh sitting on them, and away they floated out of the open window—it was a June

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afternoon—and along Bond Street, above the carriages and the hansoms and omnibuses and the people as far as Piccadilly, and round the lamp post by Egyptian Hall, up Bond Street again, and in at the window. “Hold on,” said Sinnett, and “I never held on to anything as tight in my life as I did to that table,” said Forepaugh in conclusion.

He always reminded me of the man who so annoyed my Uncle, Charles Godfrey Leland, by always knowing, doing, or having everything better or bigger than anybody else. “Why, if I were to tell him I had an elephant in my back yard,” my Uncle used to say, “he would at once invite me to see the mastodon in his.” Forepaugh had a mastodon up his sleeve for everybody else’s elephant.

## V

If Forepaugh gave us a great deal of information we had no possible use for and talked us to despair, he was really a good fellow whom we should have missed from our table. And it was through him J. and I were first made welcome in that one house open to us, to which I have been all this time in coming. For it was Forepaugh who told Vedder we were in Rome, and Vedder,



By Courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Company

ELIHU VEDDER





## NIGHTS: IN ROME

once he knew it, would not hear of our shutting his door in our own faces, nor would Mrs. Vedder, whatever the condition of our wardrobe.

Vedder may have revealed many things in his recent *Digressions*, but not the extent of the hospitality he and his wife showed to the American who was a stranger in Rome, where, even then, they had been long at home. Mrs. Vedder carried her amiability to the point of climbing our six flights of stairs and calling on me in the rooms that suited us admirably for our work but were less adapted to afternoon receptions, and she would have gone further and shown me how to adapt them by moving every bit of furniture from where it was and arranging it all over again. Not the least part of her friendliness was not to mind when I did not fall in with her plans, as I couldn't, since so long as the sun shone in at the windows all was right with the rooms as far as I could see. I was in the absurd stage of industry when I did not care where my Roman furniture stood so long as my Roman tasks got done. Even our *padrona* told me her surprise that, foreigner as I was, I seemed to do as much work as she did, which I accepted as a compliment. After that first attempt Mrs. Vedder did not return to climb our six flights, but she would

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not let us off from climbing her four or five.

Often as we took advantage of their hospitality, we never found the Vedders alone and, chiefly American as was the group at their fireside, it was never without a foreigner or two. The first person we were introduced to on the first visit was the Englishman who would have deserted us in the *Ghetto* had we let him have his way, and who, when he saw us, looked as if he wished the Vedders had learned to be less indiscriminate in their hospitality. We had the satisfaction of knowing that we made him supremely uncomfortable. He frowned upon us then as he continued to all through the winter. He could not forgive us for having found him out and was evidently afraid we were going to tell everybody about it. He was something very learned and was occupied in writing a book on Ancient Rome; later he became something more important at South Kensington. But no degree of learning and importance helped him to forget, or anyway to forgive. At chance meetings years afterwards in London he frowned, as no doubt he would still had he not long since gone to the land where I hope all frowns are smoothed from his frowning brow.

If he frowned, there was another Englishman



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who smiled: an elderly man with the imperturbable serenity of a Buddha. He also had written books, I believe. I remember articles by him, with art for subject, in the *Portfolio* at a time when everybody had taken to writing about art, and I think his name was Davies. But it would be more in character to forget that he ever worked or had a name. When I was in Rome he had risen above activity and toil to the contemplative life and, I suppose, to the income that made it possible. One night he explained his philosophy to me. Men could not be happy without sunshine, he thought. The sun was house, food, clothes, furniture, identity, everything, and as most of the year in England sunshine was not to be had at any price, he had come to live in Rome where almost all the year it was his for nothing. He sat on the Pincian or in other gardens during the day, doing nothing in the sunshine—that was living. And he urged me to follow his example and not to wait until half my life had been wasted in the pursuit of happiness where it was not to be found. He may have been right, but I never needed to become a philosopher to value the virtue of indolence,—my trouble is that I have never had the money to pay for it. Any man has the ability to do nothing, a great authority has

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said, and I can answer for one woman who has more than her fair share of it. I have always envied the North American Indians for their enjoyment of what it seems Burke attributed to them: "the highest boon of Heaven, supreme and perpetual indolence."

As regular a visitor was a huge long-bearded Norwegian who looked a prophet and was an artist, and who spent most of the winter in the study of Marion Crawford's novels, I cannot imagine why, as they roused him to fury.

"Marion Crawford," he would thunder at us as if somehow we were responsible, "Bah! He is a weak imitator of Bulwer, that is all, and he has not Bulwer's power of construction. He is not Bulwer. No. He is a weakling. Bah!"

My only quarrel with Marion Crawford's books was that they never excited strong emotion in me, one way or the other, and I was so puzzled by his excitement that I remember I went to the trouble of getting out *Mr. Isaacs* and *A Roman Singer* from Piali's Library in the *Piazza di Spagna*, that centre of learning and literature for the English in Rome where, one day when I asked for Pepys's Diary, they offered me Marcus Ward's. A new course of Marion Crawford left me as puzzled as ever for the reason of the Nor-

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wegian's rage, and I was the more impressed with the possibilities of a temperament that could heat itself to such a degree at so lukewarm a fire.

We were as certain to find this fiery Norseman and the two Englishmen any night we called as Vedder himself. Other men came and went, amongst them a few Italians and Frenchmen and more Americans, Coleman for one among them, but none could have appeared as regularly, so much fainter is the impression they have left with me. Naturally, they were mostly artists and at Vedder's, as at the *café*, the talk was chiefly of art. There was little of his work to see, for his studio was some distance from his apartment. But it was enough to see Vedder himself or, for that matter, enough to hear him. In his own house he led the talk, even Forepaugh having small chance against him. He was as prolific, a splendidly determined and animated talker. It was stimulating just to watch him talk. He was never still, he rarely sat down, he was always moving about, walking up and down, at times breaking into song and even dance. He was then in his prime, large, with a fine expressive face, and as American in his voice, in his manner, in his humour as if he had never crossed the Atlantic. The true American never gets Euro-

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peanized, nor does he want to, however long he may stay on the wrong side of the Atlantic. When I was with Vedder, Broadway always seemed nearer than the *Corso*.

He had recently finished the illustrations for the *Rubaiyat* and the book was published while we were in Rome. It was never long out of his talk. He would tell us the history of every design and of every model or pot in it. He exulted in the stroke of genius by which he had invented a composition or a pose. I have heard him describe again and again how he drew the flight of a spirit from a model, outstretched and flopping up and down on a feather bed laid upon the studio floor, until she almost fainted from fatigue, while he worked from a hammock slung just above. I recall his delight when a friend of Fitzgerald's sent him Fitzgerald's photograph with many compliments, asking for his in return. And he rejoiced in the story of Dr. Chamberlain filling a difficult tooth for the Queen and all the while singing the praises of the *Rubaiyat* until she ordered a copy of the *édition de luxe*. In looking back, I always seem to see Mrs. Vedder pasting notices into a scrap book, and to hear Vedder declaiming Omar's quatrains and describing his own drawings. There was one evening when he

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came to a dead stop in his walk and his talk, and shaking a dramatic finger at us all, said:

"I tell you what it is. I am not Vedder. I am Omar Khayyam!"

"No," drawled the voice of a disgusted artist who had not got a word in for more than an hour, "No, you're not. You're the Great I Am!"

Vedder laughed with the rest of us, but I am not sure he liked it. He could and did enjoy a joke, even if at his expense. I remember his delight one night in telling the story of an old lady who had visited his studio during the day and who sat so long in front of one of his pictures he thought it was having its effect, but whose only comment at the end of several minutes was: "That's a pretty frame you have there!" He was sensitive to criticism, however, though he carried it off with a laugh. Clarence Cook was one of the critics of his Omar who offended him.

"It's funny," Vedder said, "all my life I've hurt Clarence's feelings. He always has been sure I have done my work for no other reason than to irritate him, and now that's the way he feels about the Omar."

The laugh was not so ready when Andrew Lang—I think it was Lang—wrote that Vedder's



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Omar Khayyam was not of Persia, but of Skaneateles. And after I suggested that it was really of Rome, and some mistaken friend at home sent my article to Vedder, I never thought him quite so cordial.

### VI

And so the winter passed. For us there was always a refuge from our cold rooms at the *café* or at Vedder's, and it was seldom we did not profit by it.

Occasionally during our rambles we stumbled unexpectedly upon old friends "doing Italy" and genuinely glad to see us, as we were to see them, inviting us to their hotels at every risk of the disapproval of manager and porters and waiters; and so powerful was the influence of Rome and the *café* that now the marvel was to sit and listen to talk about Philadelphia, and where everybody was going for the summer, and who was getting married, and who had died, and what Philadelphia was thinking and doing, as if, after all, there were still benighted people in the world who believed not in art, but in Philadelphia as of supreme importance.

Occasionally we made new friends outside of our pleasant *café* life. I have forgotten how,

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though I have not forgotten it was in Rome, thanks to a letter of introduction from Dr. Garnett of the British Museum, that we first met Miss Harriet Waters Preston, who, for her part, had already introduced me to Mistral—how many Americans had heard of Mistral before she translated *Mirèio*?—and who now accepted us, cycling tweeds and all, notwithstanding the shock they must have been to the admirably appointed *pension* where she stayed. She also climbed our six flights, her niece and collaborator, Miss Louise Dodge, with her, probably both busy that winter collecting facts for their *Private Life of the Romans*, and where could they have found a more perfect background for the past they were studying than when they looked down from our windows over Rome, to the *Campagna* beyond, and upon the horizon the shining line that we knew was the Mediterranean,—over all the beauty that has not changed in the meanwhile, though old streets and old villas and old slums have vanished. And at these times, in the talk, not Philadelphia, but literature was for a while art's rival.

And there were days when we played truant and climbed down in the morning's first freshness from the high room overlooking Rome and the work that had to be done in it, and loafed all day



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in Roman galleries and at Roman ceremonies, or strayed to places further afield—Tivoli, Albano, Ostia, Marino, Rocca di Papa,—getting back to Rome with feet too tired to take us anywhere except up our six flights again. And there were nights when the affairs of Rome drew us from the *café*. I remember once our little group interrupted their interminable arguments long enough to see the Tiber in flood, down by the *Ripetta*, where people were going about in boats, and Rome looked like the Venice to which I had then never been, and we met King Humbert and Queen Margherita in his American trotting wagon driving down alone so as to show their sympathy, for, whatever they may not have done, they always appeared in person when their people were in trouble: not so many weeks before we had watched the enthusiasm with which the Romans greeted King Humbert on his return from visiting the cholera-stricken town of Naples. And I remember on *Befana* Night we adjourned to the *Piazza Navona* to blow horns and reed whistles into other people's ears and to have them blown into ours. For the humours of the Carnival there was no need to leave the *café*, where one *Pulcinello* after another broke into our talk with witticisms that kept the *café* in an uproar, and

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for me destroyed whatever sentiment there might have been in the thought that this was my last night in Rome—the last of the friendly nights of talk in the *Nazionale* to which we always returned no matter how far we might occasionally stray from it—the friendly nights of talk when I learned my folly in ever having believed that anything in the world mattered, that anything in the world existed, save art.

*Pulcinello*, the newest of our Roman friends, went with us from Rome, following us to Naples, a familiar face to lighten our homesickness for the rooms full of sunshine at the top of the high house on the top of the high hill, and for the blue plush and the gilding and the mirrors and the talk of the *Nazionale*.

And *Pulcinello* went with us to Pompeii, re-appearing during our nights at the *Albergo del Sole*, that most delightful and impossible of all the inns that ever were. It may have vanished in the quarter of a century that has passed since the February day I came to it, when the sky was as blue as the sea, and a soft cloud hung over Vesuvius, and flowers were sweet in the land—can anyone who ever smelt it forget the sweetness of the flowering bean in the wide fields near the Bay of Naples? But Pompeii could never be

## NIGHTS

the same without the *Sole*. And it was made for our shabbiness, its three tumbled-down little houses ranged round the three sides of an unkempt, mud-floored court; our bedroom without lock or latch and with a mirror cracked from side to side like the Lady of Shalott's, though for other reasons; the dining-room with earthen floor, walls decorated by a modern-primitive fresco of the *padrone* holding a plate of *maccheroni* in one hand and a flask of *Lachrima Christi* in the other, a central column spreading out branches like a tree and bearing for fruit row upon row of still unopened bottles, a door free to all the stray monks and beggars of Pompeii—to all the fowls too, including the gorgeous peacock that strolled in after its evening walk with the young Swiss artist on the flat roof of the inn where, together, they went before dinner to watch the sunset.

Throughout dinner, at the head of the long table where we sat with the Swiss artist and an old German professor of art and an older Italian archæologist, the talk, as at the *Nazionale*, was of art, so that it also, like *Pulcinello*, crying his jests through the window or at our elbow, made me feel at home. While we helped ourselves from that amazing dish into which you stuck a fork

## NIGHTS: IN ROME

and pulled out a bit of chicken or duck or beef or mutton or sausage; while the old professor and archæologist absent-mindedly stretched a hand to the column behind them, and plucked from it bottle after bottle of wine; while the beggars whined at the open door, and the monks begged at our side, and *Pulcinello* capered and jested and sang; while the American tourists at the other end of the table deplored the disorder and noise until we sent them the longest and most expensive way up Vesuvius to get rid of them; while the fowls fought for the crumbs;—the talk was still of art and again of art, in the end as in the beginning. I might not understand half of it, coming as it did in a confused torrent of German, Italian, French, and English, but the nights at the *Sole*, like the nights at the *Nazionale*, made this one truth clear: that nothing matters in the world, that nothing exists in the world, save art.



**III**  
**NIGHTS**  
**IN VENICE**





## IN VENICE

### I

WE reached Venice at an unearthly hour of a March morning and the first thing I knew of it somebody was shouting, "*Venezia!*" and I was startled from a sound sleep, and porters were scrambling for our bags, and we were stumbling after them, up a long platform, between a crowd of men in hotel caps yelling: "*Danieli!*" "*Britannia!*" and I hardly heard what, out into a fog as impenetrable as night or London. The muffled, ghostly cries of "*gondola! gondola!*" from invisible gondoliers on invisible waters would have sent me back into the station even had there been a chance to find so modest a hotel as the *Casa Kirsch* open so preposterously early, and my first impressions of Venice were gathered in the freezing, foggy station restaurant where J. and I drank our coffee and yawned, and I would have thought Ruskin a fraud with his purple passage describing the traveller's arrival in Venice upon which I had based my expectations, had I been wide enough awake to think of anything at all, and the hours stretched themselves into centuries before

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a touch of yellow in the fog suggested a sun shining in some remote world, and we crawled under the cover of one of the dim black boats that emerged vaguely, a shadow from the shadows.

I had looked forward to my first *gondola* ride for that "little first Venetian thrill" that Venice owes to the stranger. But I did not thrill, I shivered with cold and damp and fog as the *gondola* pushed through the yellow gloom in the sort of silence you can feel, and tall houses towered suddenly and horribly above us, and strange yells broke the stillness before and behind, when another black boat with a black figure at the stern, came out of the gloom, scraped and bumped our side, and was swallowed up again.

And after we were on the landing of the *Casa Kirsch*, and up in our rooms, and the fog lifted, and the sun shone, and we looked out of our windows with all Venice in our faces, and J. took me to see the town, my impressions were still foggy with sleep. For, from Pompeii, where there had been work, to Venice where there was to be more, we had hurried by one of those day-and-night flights to which J. has never accustomed me, the hurried, crowded pauses at Naples and Orvieto and Florence and Pisa and Lucca and Pistoia turning the journey into a beautiful

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nightmare of which all I was now seeing became but a part: the *Riva*, canals, sails, *Bersaglieri*, the Ducal Palace, the Bridge of Sighs, St. Mark's, the *Piazza*, *gondolas*, women in black, white sunlight, pigeons, tourists, the *Campanile*, following one upon another with the inconsequence of troubled dreams. And then we were on the *Rialto* and J. was saying "Of course you know that?" and I was answering "Of course, the Bridge of Sighs!" and the many years between have not blunted the edge of his disgust or my remorse. But my disgrace drove me back to the *Casa Kirsch*, to sleep for fifteen blessed hours before looking at one other beautiful thing or troubling my head about what we were to do with our days and our nights in Venice.

## II

What we were to do with our days settled itself the next morning as soon as I woke. For Venice, out of my window, was rising from the sea with the dawn, everything it ought to have been the morning before, and I had no desire to move from a room that looked down upon the *Riva*, and across to *San Giorgio*, and beyond the island- and sail-strewn lagoon to the low line of

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the *Lido*, and above to the vastness of the Venetian sky.

Nor was there trouble in providing for our nights. Before I left home a romantic friend had pictured me in Venice, wrapped in black lace, forever floating in a *gondola* under the moon. But my Roman winter had taught me how much more likely the gas-light of some little *trattoria* and *café* was to shine upon me in my well-worn tweeds, my education having got so far advanced that any other end to my day of work could not seem possible. The only question was upon which of the many little *trattorie* and *cafés* in Venice our choice should fall, and this was decided for us by Duveneck, whom we ran across that same morning in the *Piazza*, and who told us that he slept in the *Casa Kirsch*, dined at the *Antica Panada*, and drank coffee at the *Orientale*, which was as much as to say that we might too if we liked. And of course we liked, for it is a great compliment when a man in Venice, or any Italian town,—especially if he is of the importance and distinction to which Duveneck had already attained,—makes you free to join him at dinner and over after-dinner coffee. It is more than a compliment. It launches you in Venice as to be presented at court launches you in London.



Painting by Joseph R. De Camp

FRANK DUENECK





## NIGHTS: IN VENICE

We began that night to dine at the *Panada* and drink coffee at the *Orientale*, and we kept on dining at the *Panada* and drinking coffee at the *Orientale* every night we were in Venice; except when it was a *fiesta* and we followed Duveneck to the *Calcino*, where various Royal Academicians sustained the respectability Ruskin gave it by his patronage and Symonds tried to live up to; or when there was music in the *Piazza* and, happy to do whatever Duveneck did, we went with him to the *Quadri* or *Florian's*; or when it stormed, as it can in March, and all day from my window I had looked down upon the dripping *Riva* and the wind-waved Lagoon and lines of fishing boats moored to the banks, and no living creatures except the gulls, and the little white woolly dogs on the fishing boats covered with sails, and the sailors miserably huddled together, and gondoliers in yellow oilskins, and the *Bersaglieri* in hoods—what the *Bersaglieri* were doing there even in sunshine was one of the mysteries of Venice;—then we went with Duveneck no further than the kitchen of the *Casa Kirsch*, for he hated, as we hated, the *table d'hôte* from which, there as everywhere, German tourists were talking away every other nationality.

The kitchen was a huge room, with high ceil-

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ing, and brass and copper pots and pans on the whitewashed walls, and a dim light about the cooking stove, and dark shadowy corners. The *padrona* laid the cloth for us in an alcove opposite the great fireplace, while she and her family sat at a table against the wall to the right, and the old cook ate at a bare table in the middle, and the maid-servant sat on a stool by the fire with her plate in her lap, and the man-servant stood in the corner with his plate on the dresser. Having thus expressed their respect for class distinctions, they felt no further obligation, but they all helped equally in cooking and serving, talked together the whole time, quarrelled, called each other names, and laughed at the old man's stories told in the Venetian which I only wish I had understood then as well as I did a few weeks later, when it was too late, for, with the coming of spring, there were no storms to keep us from the *Panada*.

Just where the *Panada* was I would not attempt to say; not from any desire to keep it secret, which would be foolish, for Baedeker long since found it out; but simply because I could not very well show the way to a place I never could find for myself. I knew it was somewhere round the corner from the *Piazza*, but I never

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rounded that corner alone without becoming involved in a labyrinth of little *calli*. Nor would I attempt to say why the artists chose it and why, because they did, we should, for it was then the dirtiest, noisiest, and most crowded *trattoria* in Venice, though the last time I was there, years afterwards, it was so spick and span, with another room and more waiters to relieve the congestion, that I could not believe it really was the *Panada* and, with the inconsistency natural under the circumstances, did not like it half so well.

No matter whether we got there early or late, the *Panada* was always full. As soon as we sat down we began our dinner by wiping our glasses, plates, forks, spoons, and knives on our napkins, making such a habit of it that I remember afterwards at a dinner-party in London catching myself with my glass in my hand and stopping only just in time, while Duveneck, on another occasion, got as far as the silver before he was held up by the severe eye of his hostess. Probably it was because nobody could hear what anybody said that everybody talked together. I cannot recall a moment when stray musicians were not strumming on guitars and mandolins, and the oyster man was not shrieking: "*Ostreche!*"

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*Fresche! Ostreche!*” though nobody paid the least attention to him or ever bought one of his oysters. And above the uproar was the continuous cry: “*Ecco me! Vengo subito! Mezzo Verona! Due Calomai! Vengo subito! Ecco me!*” of the waiters, who, though they never ceased to announce their coming, were so slow to come that many diners brought a course or two in their pockets to occupy them during the intervals.

The little Venetian at the next table was sure to produce a bunch of radishes while he waited for his soup; on market days, when there was more of a crowd than ever, few of the many baked potatoes eaten at almost every table had seen the inside of the *Panada's* oven; often the shops that fill the Venetian *calli* with the perpetual smell of frying and where the brasses and the blue-and-white used to shine, were patronized on the way—if dinner has to be collected in the streets, no town, even in Italy, offers such facilities as Venice. From *Minestra* to fruit and cheese, the Venetian in a few minutes' walk may pick up a substantial dinner and carry it to the rooms or the street corner where it is his habit to dine. Vance, the painter, who sometimes favoured us at our table with his company, went

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further and, after he had taken off his coat and put on his hat and emptied his pockets, seldom troubled the establishment to provide him with more than a glass, a plate, a knife, and a fork, for the price of a *quinto* of Verona. His first, and as it turned out his last, more extravagant order, was the event of the season. The *padrone* discussed it with him and a message was sent to the cook that the dish was *di bistecca*. When it came it was not cooked enough to suit Vance. A second was cooked too much. The third was done to a turn. In the bill, however, were the three, and voices were lowered, mandolins and guitars were stilled, the oyster man forgot his shriek, during the five awful minutes when Vance and the *padrone* had it out. After that Vance made another *trattoria* the richer by his daily *quinto*.

J. and I had our five minutes with the *padrone* later on once when Rossi, our waiter, was so slow that our patience gave out and we shook the dust of the *Panada* from our feet. But we could not shake off Rossi. He had arrived with our dinner just as we were vanishing from the door and was made to pay for it. After that his leisure was spent in trying to make us pay him back and he would appear at our bedroom door, or waylay us



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on the *Riva*, or follow us into the *Orientale*, or run us down in the *Piazza*, demanding the money as a right, begging for it as a charity, reducing it by a *centesimo* every time until we had only to wait long enough for the debt to be wiped out. But this was at the end of our stay in Venice, and months of dining at the *Panada* had passed before then.

### III

I would be as puzzled to explain the attraction of the *Orientale* on the *Riva*, unless it was the opportunity it offered for economy. In the *Piazza*, at the *Quadri* and *Florian's*, which are to the other *cafés* of Venice what St. Mark's is to the other churches, coffee was twenty *centesimi* and the waiter expected five more, but at the *Orientale* it was eighteen and the waiter was satisfied with the change from twenty, which meant for us the saving every night of almost half a cent. The *Orientale* was by comparison as quiet and deserted as the *Panada* was crowded and noisy. Outside, tables looked upon the Lagoon and the façade of *San Giorgio*, white in the night. In a big, new, gilded room sailors and sergeants played checkers and more serious Venetians worked out dismal problems in chess. But Duveneck's corner was in the older, shabby,



Etching by Joseph Pennell

THE CAFÉ ORIENTALE, VENICE



## NIGHTS: IN VENICE

stuffy, low-ceilinged room, and having once settled there we never wanted to move. As a rule we shared it with only an elderly Englishman and his son who read the *Standard* in the opposite corner—after our race with them to the *café*, the winners getting the one English paper first—and we were seldom intruded upon or interrupted except by the occasional visit of the *carameli* man with his brass tray of candied fruit, impaled on thin sticks, like little birds on a skewer, which led us into our one extravagance.

Had the old room been seedier and duller—dull our company never was—I still would have seen it through the glamour of youth and thought it the one place in which to study Venice and Venetian life. But nobody who ever sat there with us could have complained of dulness so long as Duveneck presided at our table. In Duveneck's case I cannot help breaking my golden rule never to speak in print of the living—rules were made to be broken. And why shouldn't I? I might as well not write at all about our nights in Venice as to leave him out of them, he who held them together and fashioned them into what they were. In the *Atlantic*, as a makeshift, I called him Inglehart, the disguise under which he figures in one of Howells's novels.

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But why not call him boldly by his name when Inglehart is the thinnest and flimsiest of masks, as friends of his were quick to tell me, and Duveneck means so much more to all who know—and all who do not know are not worth bothering about. It was only yesterday at San Francisco that the artists of America gave an unmistakable proof of what their opinion of Duveneck is now. In the Eighties “the boys” already thought as much of him and a hundred times more.

Duveneck, as I remember him then—I have seen him but once since—was large, fair, golden-haired, with long drooping golden moustache, of a type apt to suggest indolence and indifference. As he lolled against the red velvet cushions smoking his Cavour, enjoying the talk of others as much as his own or more—for he had the talent of eloquent silence when he chose to cultivate it—his eyes half shut, smiling with casual benevolence, he may have looked to a stranger incapable of action, and as if he did not know whether he was alone or not, and cared less. And yet he had a big record of activity behind him, young as he was; he always inspired activity in others, he was rarely without a large and devoted following. He it was who drew “the boys” to Munich, then from Munich to Florence, and then from Florence

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to Venice, and "the boys" have passed into the history of American Art and the history of Venice—wouldn't that give me away and explain who he was if I called him Inglehart dozens of times over? And he also it was who packed them off again before they learnt how easy it is to be content in Venice without doing anything at all, though I used to fancy that he would have been rather glad to indulge in that content himself. How far he was from the pleasant Venetian habit of idling all day, his Venetian etchings, at which he was working that spring—the etchings that on their appearance in London were the innocent cause of a stirring chapter in *The Gentle Art*—are an enduring proof. And I knew a good deal of what was going on in his studio at the time, for J. spent many busy hours with him there, while I, left to my own devices, stared industriously from the windows of the *Casa Kirsch*, making believe I was gathering material, or strolled along the *Riva* pretending it was to market for my mid-day meal, though the baker was almost next door, and the man from whom I bought the little dried figs that nowhere are so dried and shrivelled up as in Venice, was seldom more than a minute away. I can see now, when I consider how my Venetian days were spent, that I came perilously



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near to sinking to the deepest depths of Venetian idleness myself.

We were never alone with Duveneck at the *Orientale*. The American Consul was sure to drop in, as he had for so many years that half his occupation would have gone if he hadn't dropped in any longer. Martin joined us because he loved to argue anybody into a temper and, as he was an awful bore, succeeded with most people. He could drive me to proving that white was black, to overturning all my most cherished idols, or to forgetting my timidity and laying down the law upon any point of art he might bring up. Duveneck alone refused to be roused and Martin, who could not understand or accept his failure, was forever coming back, making himself a bigger bore than ever, by trying again. But Shinn was the only man I ever knew to put Duveneck into something like a temper, and that was by asking him deferentially one night if he did not think St. Mark's a very fine church—the next minute, however, calming him down by inviting him out “in my gandler.”

Arnold was as regular in attendance. He found the *café* as comfortable a place to sleep in as any other. Like Sancho Panza he had a talent for sleeping. He had made his name and fame

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as one of the Harvard baseball team in I will not say what year, and sleep had been his chief occupation ever since. No end of stories were going the round of the studios and *cafés*—he invited them without wanting it or meaning to. He was supposed to be in Venice to study with Duveneck, at whose studio he was said to arrive regularly at the same hour every morning. And as regularly he was snoring before he had been sitting in front of his easel for ten minutes. During his nap, Duveneck would come round and shake him and before he slept again put a touch to the study and, as Arnold promptly dozed off, would work on it until it was finished, and unless it slid down the canvas with the quantity of bitumen Arnold used—there was one story of the beautiful eyes in a beautiful portrait, before they could be stopped, sliding into the chin of the pretty girl who was posing—Arnold, waking up eventually, would carry off the painting unconscious that he had not finished it himself. Nobody can say how many Duvenecks are masquerading at home as Arnolds while their owners wonder why Arnold has never since done any work a tenth as good.

The one thing that roused him was baseball, and he was in fine form on the afternoons when he and a few other enthusiasts spent an hour or

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so on the Lido for practice. The Englishmen did not believe in the prodigies they heard of him as a baseball player. It wasn't easy for anybody to believe that a man who was always tumbling off to sleep on the slightest provocation could play anything decently. But I was told that one day he was wide enough awake to be irritated, and he bet them a dinner he could pitch the swell British cricketer among them three balls not any one of which the Briton could catch. And on Easter Monday they all went over to the Lido. The Briton asked for a high ball: it skimmed along near the ground and then rose over his head as he stooped for it. He asked for a low one: it came straight for his nose and, when he dodged it, dropped and went between his legs. He asked for a medium one: it curved away out to the right, he rushed for it, it curved back again and took him in his manly bosom. The rest of the Britons and "the boys," they say, enjoyed the dinner more than he did. Such was the affair as it was described to me and confirmed by gossip. I pretend to no authority on a subject I understand so little as balls and the pitching of them.

A better contrast to Arnold could not have been found than the artist with the part Spanish, part German name who called himself a French-

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man, and who aimed to give his pose the mystery that crept, or bounded when encouraged, into his incessant talk. I am afraid his chief encouragement came from me. The others were as irritated by his dabbling in magic as most of us had been in Rome by Forepaugh's theosophic adventures. But he amused me; he did not deal in the prose of his brand of magic, the Black, of which so much was beginning to be heard, and still more was to be heard, in Paris. He was all innuendo and strange hints and whispered secrets, and I-could-if-I-woulds. One of my recent winters had been devoted, not to dabbling in magic, for which I have not the temperament, but to reading the literature of magic or of all things psychical, and I could then, though I could not now, have passed a fairly good examination in the modern authorities, from Madame Blavatsky to Louis Jacolliot. Therefore I proved a sympathetic listener and heard, for my pains, of the revival of old religions, and above all of old rites, and of his dignity as high-priest, a figure of mystery and command moving here and there among shadowy disciples in shadowy sanctuaries. For one sunk such fathoms deep in mystery he was surprisingly concerned for the outward sign. Like Huysmans's hero, he believed

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in the significance of the material background, entertaining me with a detailed description of his apartment in Paris, and I have not yet lost the vision he permitted me of a bedroom hung and painted with scarlet, and of himself enshrined in it, magnificent in scarlet silk pajamas. Probably it was to deceive the world that he carried a tiny paint-box. I never saw him open it.

But most constant of our little party was Jobbins, our one Englishman, who came in late to the *Orientale*—where, or if, he dined none of us could say—with the stool and canvas and paint-box he had been carrying about all day from one *campo*, or *calle*, or *canale*, to another, in search of a subject. Jobbins's trouble was that he had passed too brilliantly through South Kensington to do the teaching for which he was trained, or to be willing to do anything but paint great pictures the subjects for which he could never find; his mistake was to want to paint them in Venice where there is nothing to paint that has not been painted hundreds, or thousands, or millions of times before; and his misfortune was not to seek in adversity the comfort and hope which the philosopher believes to be its reward. He had become, as a consequence, the weariest man who breathed. It made me tired to look at him. Later,



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he was forced to abandon his high ambition and he accepted a good post as teacher somewhere in India. But he lived a short time to enjoy it and I am sure he was homesick for Venice, and the search after the impossible, and the old days when he was so abominably hard up that even J. and I were richer. Of the complete crash by which we all gained—including the man who got the Whistler painted on the back of a Jobbins panel—I still have reminders in a brass plaque and bits of embroideries hung up on our walls and brocades made into screens, which J. bought from him to save the situation, at the risk of creating a new one from which somebody would have to save us.

For all his weariness, Jobbins looked ridiculously young. He insisted that this was what lost him his one chance of selling a picture. He was painting in the Frari a subject which he vainly hoped was his own, when an American family of three came and stared over his shoulder.

“Why, it’s going to be a picture!” the small child discovered.

“And he such a boy too!” the mother marvelled.

“Then it can’t be of any value,” the father said in the loud cheerful voice in which American



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and English tourists in Venice make their most personal comments, convinced that nobody can understand, though every other person they meet is a fellow countryman. A story used to be told of Bunney at work in the *Piazza*, on his endless study of St. Mark's for Ruskin, one bitter winter morning, when three English girls, wrapped in furs, passed. One stopped behind him:

"Oh Maud! Ethel!" she called, "do come back and see what this poor shivering old wretch is doing."

The talk in our corner of the *Orientale* kept us in the past until I began to fear that, just as some people grow prematurely grey, so J. and I, not a year married, had prematurely reached the time for creeping in close about the fire—or a *café* table—and telling grey tales of what we had been. It was a very different past from that which tourists were then bullied by Ruskin into believing should alone concern them in Venice—indeed, my greatest astonishment in this astonishing year was that, while the people who were not artists but posed as knowing all about art did nothing but quote Ruskin, artists never quoted him, and never mentioned him except to show how little use they had for him. But then, as I was beginning to find out, it is the privilege of

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the artist to think what he knows and to say what he thinks. We were none of us tourists at our little table, we were none of us seeing sights, being far too busy doing the work we were in Venice to do; and no matter what Ruskin and Baedeker taught, "the boys" gave the date which overshadowed for us every other in Venetian history. Nothing that had happened in Venice before or after counted, though "the boys" themselves were in their turn a good deal overshadowed by Whistler, who had been there with them for a while.

It was extraordinary how the Whistler tradition had developed and strengthened in the little more than four years since he had left Venice. I had never met him then, though J. had a few months before in London. I hardly hoped ever to meet him; I certainly could not expect that the day would come when he would be our friend, with us constantly, letting us learn far more about him and far more intimately than from all the talk at a *café* table of those who already knew him, accepted him as a master, and loved him as a man. But had my knowledge of him come solely from those months in Venice I should still have realized the power of his personality and the force of his influence. He seemed

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to pervade the place, to colour the atmosphere. He had stayed in Venice only about a year. In the early Eighties little had been written of him except in contempt or ridicule. But to the artist he had become as essentially a part of Venice, his work as inseparable from its associations, as the Venetian painters like Carpaccio and Tintoretto who had lived and worked there all their lives and about whom a voluminous literature had grown up, culminating in the big and little volumes by Ruskin upon which the public crowding to Venice based their artistic creed. During those old nights I heard far more of the few little inches of Whistler's etchings and of Whistler's pastels than of the great expanse of Tintoretto's *Paradise* or of Carpaccio's decorations in the little church of *San Giorgio degli Schiavoni*. The fact made and has left the greater impression because the winter in Rome had not worn off, for me, the novelty of artists' talk or quite accustomed me to their point of view, to their surprising independence in not accepting the current and easy doctrine that everything old is sacred, everything modern insignificant. Because a painter happened to paint a couple of hundred years or more ago did not place him above their criticism; because he happened to

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paint to-day was apt to make him more interesting to them.

At the *Orientale* the talk could never keep very long from Whistler. It might be of art—question of technique, of treatment, of arrangement, of any or all the artist's problems—and sooner or later it would be referred to what Whistler did or did not. Or the talk might grow reminiscent and again it was sure to return to Whistler. Not only at the *Orientale*, but at any *café* or restaurant or house or gallery where two or three artists were gathered together, Whistler stories were always told before the meeting broke up. It was then we first heard the gold-fish story, and the devil-in-the-glass story, and the Wolkoff-pastel story, and the farewell-feast story, and the innumerable stories labelled and pigeon-holed by "the boys" for future use, and so recently told by J. and myself in the greatest story of all—the story of his Life—that it is too soon for me to tell them again. Up till then I had shared the popular idea of him as a man who might be ridiculed, abused, feared, hated, anything rather than loved. But none of the men in Venice could speak of him without affection. "Not a bad chap," Jobbins would forget his weariness to say, "not half a bad chap!" and one night he told

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one of the few Whistler stories never yet told in print, except in the *Atlantic Monthly* where this chapter was first published.

"He rather liked me," said Jobbins, "liked to have me about, and to help on Sundays when he showed his pastels. But that wasn't my game, you know, and I got tired of it, and one Sunday when lots of people were there and he asked me to bring out that drawing of a *calle* with tall houses, and away up above clothes hung out to dry, and a pair of trousers in the middle, I said: 'Have you got a title for it, Whistler?' 'No,' he said. 'Well,' I said, 'call it an *Arrangement in Trousers*,' and everybody laughed. I'd have sneaked away, for he was furious. But he wouldn't let me, kept his eye on me, though he didn't say a word until they'd all gone. Then he looked at me rather with that Shakespeare fellow's *Et tu Brute* look: 'Why, Jobbins, you, who are so amiable?' That was all. No, not half a bad chap."

Now and then talk of Whistler and "the boys" reminded Duveneck of his own student days, and would lead him into personal reminiscences, when the stories were of his adventures; sometimes on Bavarian roads, singing and fiddling his way from village to village, or in Bavarian convents,



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teaching drawing to pretty novices, receiving commissions from stern Reverend Mothers; and sometimes in American towns painting the earliest American mural decoration that prepared the way, through various stages, for the latest American series of all—at the San Francisco Exposition where Duveneck was acclaimed as the American master of to-day. But in his story, as he told it to us, he had not got as far as Florence when a new turn was given to his reminiscences and to our evening talk by the descent upon Venice of the men from Munich.

### IV

They were only three—McFarlane, Anthony and Thompson, shall I call them?—but they had not journeyed all the way from Munich to talk about “the boys” and to drop sentimental tears over old love tales. They were off on an Easter holiday and meant to make the most of it. Because Duveneck was Duveneck they gave up the gayer *cafés* in the *Piazza* to be with him in the sleepy old *Orientale*. But they were not going to let it stay a sleepy old *Orientale* if they could help themselves. Their very first evening Duveneck called for two glasses of milk—to steady his nerves, he said, though he politely attributed



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the unsteadiness not to this new excitement but to the tea he had been drinking. People drifted to our room from outside and from the new room to see what the noise was about, until there was not a table to be had. The old Englishman and his son put down the *Standard* and laughed with us. The *carameli* man went away with an empty tray, I do believe the only time he was ever bought out in his life, and McFarlane treated us all to *tamarindo* to drink with the fruit, and he wound up his horrible extravagance by buying a copy of the Venetian paper "the boys" used to call the *Barabowow*. It was nothing short of a Venetian orgy.

Nor did the transformation end here. The men from Munich were so smart, especially McFarlane, in white waistcoat, with a flower in his button-hole and a gold-headed cane in his hand, that we were shocked into the consciousness of our shabbiness. Duveneck, who, until then, had been happy in an old ulster with holes in the pockets and rips in the seams, dazzled the *café* by appearing in a jaunty spring overcoat. J. exchanged his old trousers with a green stain of acid down the leg for the new pair he had hitherto worn only when he went to call on the Bronsons or to dine with Mr. Horatio Brown,

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where I could not go because I was so much more hopelessly unprepared to dine anywhere outside the *Panada* or the Kitchen of the *Casa Kirsch*. But in the *Merceria* I could at least supply myself with gloves and veils, while Jobbins unearthed a fresh cravat from somewhere. And we began to feel apologetic for the dinginess and general down-at-heelness of Venice which bored the men from Munich to extinction—really they were so bored, they said, that all day they found themselves looking forward to the *carameli* man as the town's one excitement. I thought the illuminations on Easter Sunday evening, when the *Piazza* was "a fairyland in the night," and the music deafened us, and the Bengal lights blinded us, would help to give them a livelier impression; but, though they came with us to *Florian's*, it was plain they pitied us for being so pleased.

They couldn't, for the life of them, see why the place had been so cracked up by Ruskin. Nothing was right. The *Piazza* was just simply the town's meeting place and centre of gossip, like the country village store, only on a more architectural and uncomfortable scale. The canals were breeding holes for malaria. The streets wouldn't be put up with as alleys at home.

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The language was not worth learning. At the *Panada*, after we had given our order for dinner, McFarlane would murmur languidly '*Lo stesso*' and declare it to be the one useful word in the Italian dictionary; to this Johnson added a mysterious '*Sensa crab*' when Rossi suggested '*piccoli fees*' under the delusion that he was talking English; while Anthony was quite content with the vocabulary the other two supplied him. The climate was as deplorable: either wet and cold, when the Italian *scaldino* wasn't a patch on the German stove and a *gondola* became a freezing machine; or warm and enervating when they couldn't keep awake.

They dozed in their *gondola*, they yawned in St. Mark's and the Ducal Palace and in all the other churches and palaces, and in front of all the old doorways and bridges and boat-building yards and *traghetto*s and fishing boats and wells and "bits" that Camillo, their gondolier, was inhuman enough to wake them up to look at. The beauty of Venice was exaggerated, or if they did come to a "subject" that made them pull their sketch books out of their pockets, Camillo was at once bothering them to do it from just where Guardi, or Canaletto, or Rico, or Whistler, or Ruskin, or some other old boy had painted,

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etched, or drawn it—Whistler alone had finished Venice for every artist who came after him and they were tired of his very name, and never wanted to have his etchings and pastels thrown in their faces again. What they would like to do was to discover the Italian town or village where no artist had ever been seen and the word art had never been uttered.

But it was Venetian painting that got most on their nerves. They had given it a fair chance, they protested. “Trot out your Tintoretto,” they said to Camillo every morning, and he carried them off to the Palace, and the Academy, and more churches than they thought there were in the world, and at last to the *Scuola di San Rocco*. And there a solemn man in spectacles took them in hand. They said to him too: “Trot out your Tintoretto,” and he led them up to a big, dingy canvas, and they said: “Trot out your next,” and they went the rounds of them all, and they asked, “Where’s your Duveneck?” and he said he had never heard of Duveneck, and they said, “Why, he’s here!” and they left him hunting, and were back in their *gondola* in ten minutes, and they guessed they could do with Rubens! I trembled to think of the shock to tourists and my highly intellectual friends at

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home, religiously studying Baedeker and reading Ruskin, could they have heard the men from Munich talking of art and of Venice. And I must have been painfully scandalized had I not got so much further on with my education as to have a glimmering of the truth Whistler was trying to beat into the unwilling head of the British public—that an artist knows more about art than the man who isn't an artist, and has the best right to an opinion on the subject.

Perhaps their disappointment in Venice was the reason of their preoccupation with Munich. Certainly "Now, at Munich" was the beginning and end of the talk as "when 'the boys' were here" had been before they came. They would not admit that anything good could exist outside of Munich. I remember Duveneck once suggesting that Paris was the best place for the student, to whom it was a help just to see what was going on around him.

"But what does go on round the student there?" McFarlane interrupted. "It's all fads in Paris. What do they talk about in Paris to-day but values? [This, remember, was more than a quarter of a century ago.] That's all they teach the student, all they think of. Look at Bisbing's picture last year. They all raved over it, said



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it was the *clou* of the Salon, medalled it, bought it for the Luxembourg, and I don't know what all. And what was it?—Pale green sheep in the foreground, pale green mountains in the background, so pale you could shoot peas through them. That's what you have to do now to make a success in Paris—get your values so that you can shoot peas through 'em. And what will it be to-morrow? And what help is it to the student, anyway?"

But one thing certain is, that whatever the fads and movements in the Paris studios happened to be, the American student in those days did see what was going on in Paris, and just to see, just to feel it, was, as Duveneck held, a help, an inspiration. To-day, living in his own *pensions*, studying in his own schools, loafing in his own clubs, he does not take any interest in what is going on outside of them and will talk about what "the Frenchmen are doing" as if he were still in Kalamazoo or Oshkosh.

What the student, in Duveneck's and McFarlane's time saw going on round him in Munich was, as well as I could make out, chiefly balls and pageants. To this day I cannot help thinking of life in Munich as one long spectacle and dance. Duveneck, who could talk with calmness of his



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painting, was stirred to animation when he recalled the costumes he had invented for himself and his friends. He could not conceal his pride in the success of a South Sea Islander he had designed, the effect achieved by the simple means of burnt Sienna rubbed into the poor man, but so vigorously that it took months to get it out again, and a blanket which he mislaid towards morning so that his walk home at dawn, like a savage skulking in the shadows, was a triumph of realism. Pride, too, coloured Duveneck's account of the appearance of the Socialist Carpenter of his creation who made a huge sensation by inciting to riot in the streets of an elaborate Old Munich—the origin of Old London and Old Paris and all the sham Old Towns that Exhibitions have long since staled for us. But his masterpiece was the Dissipated Gentleman, like all masterpieces a marvel of simplicity—hired evening clothes, a good long roll in the muddiest gutter on the way to the ball, and it was done; but the art, Duveneck said, was in the rolling, which in this case, under his direction, was so masterly that at the door the Dissipated Gentleman was mistaken for the real thing and, if friends had not come up in the nick of time, the door would have been shut in his face.

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Duveneck was as enthusiastic over the Charles V. ball, though all the artists of Munich contributed to its splendour, working out their costumes with such respect for truth and so regardless of cost that for months and years afterwards not a bit of old brocade or lace was to be had in the antiquity shops of Bavaria. And the students were responsible for the siege of an old castle outside the town, and in their archæological ardour persuaded the Museum to lend the armour and arms of the correct date, and, in their appreciation of the favour, fought with so much restraint that the casualties were a couple of spears snapped. And, in my recollection, their recollections stood for such truth and gorgeousness that when England, years afterwards, took to celebrating its past with pageants, more than once I found myself thinking how much better they order these things in Munich!

And from the studios came the inspiration for that ball Munich talks of to this day in which all the nations were represented. There was a Hindu temple, a Chinese pagoda, and an Indian wigwam. But the crowning touch was the Esquimaux hut. Placed in a hall apart, at the foot of a great stairway, it was built of some composition in which pitch was freely used, lit by

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tallow candles, and hung with herrings offered for sale by nine Esquimaux dressed in woollen imitation of skins with the furry side turned out. All evening the hut was surrounded, only towards midnight could the crowd be induced to move on to some fresh attraction. In the moment's lull, one of the Esquimaux was tying up a new line of herrings when he brushed a candle with his arm. In a second he was blazing. Another ran to his rescue. In another second the hut was a furnace and nine men were in flames, with pitch and wool for fuel. One of the few people still lounging about the hut, fearing a panic, gave the signal to the band, who struck up *Carmen*. Never since, McFarlane said, had he listened to the music of *Carmen*, never again could he listen to it, without seeing the burning hut, the men rushing out of it with the flames leaping high above them, tearing at the blazing wool, in their agony turning and twisting as in some wild fantastic dance, while above the music he could hear the laughter of the crowd, who thought it a joke—a new scene in the spectacle.

He snatched a rug from somewhere and tried to throw it over one of the men, but the man flew past to the top of the great stairway. There he was seized and rolled over and over on the carpet

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until the flames were out. He got up, walked downstairs, asked for beer, drank it to the dregs, and fell dead with the glass in his hand—the first to die, the first freed from his agony. Of the nine, but two survived. Seven lay with their hut, a charred heap upon the ground, before the laughing crowd realized what a pageant of horror Fate had planned for them.

Munich stories, before the night was over, had to be washed down with Munich beer, which, at that time as still, I fancy, was best at Bauer's. By some unwritten law, inscrutable as the written, it was decreed that, though I might sit all evening the only woman at our table in the *Orientale*—oftener than not the only woman in the *café*—it was not "the thing" for me to go on to Bauer's. Therefore, first, the whole company would see me home. It was a short stroll along the *Riva*, but the Lagoon, dim and shadowy, stretched away beyond us, dimmer islands resting on its waters, the lights of the boats sprinkling it with gold under the high Venetian sky sprinkled with stars; and so beautiful was it, and so sweet the April night, that the men from Munich could not hold out against the enchantment of Venice in spring. I felt it a concession when McFarlane admitted the loveliness of Venice by starlight, and his

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languor dropped from him under the spell, and I knew the game of boredom was up when, in this starlight, he decided that, after all, there might be more in the Tintoretto's than he thought if only he had time to study them. But Easter holidays do not last for ever, and the day soon came when the men from Munich had to go back to where all was for the best in the best of all towns, but where no doubt, on the principle that we always prefer what we have not got at the moment, they told "the fellows" in the *Bier Kellers* that only in Venice was life worth while, that Rubens was dingy, and that they guessed they could do with Tintoretto.

### V

Somehow, we were never the same after they left us; not, I fancy, because we missed them, but because we could hold out still less than they against the spring. When the sun was so warm and the air so soft, when in the little canals wistaria bloomed over high brick walls, when boatloads of flowers came into Venice with the morning, when at noon the *Riva* was strewn with sleepers—then indoors and work became an impertinence. On the slightest excuse J. and Duveneck no longer shut themselves in the studio,



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I gave up collecting material from my window and lunch from the *Riva*, Jobbins interrupted his search and Martin his argument, the Consul fought shy of the old corner in the *café*. And in the languid laziness that stole upon Venice, as well as upon us, I penetrated for the first time to the inner meaning of the chapter in his *Venetian Life* that Howells labels *Comincia far Caldo*, the season when repose takes you to her inner heart and you learn her secrets, when at last you know *why* it was an Abyssinian maid who played upon her dulcimer, at last you recognize in Xanadu the land where you were born.

There was never a *festa* in the *Piazza* that we were not there, watching or walking with the bewildering procession of elegant young Venetians, and peasants from the mainland, and officers, and soldiers, and gondoliers with big caps set jauntily on their curls, and beautiful girls in the gay fringed shawls that have disappeared from Venice and the wooden shoes that once made an endless clatter along the *Riva* but are heard no more, and Greeks, and Armenians, and priests, and beggars, passing up and down between the arcades and the *café* tables that overflowed far into the square, St. Mark's more unreal in its splendour than ever with its domes and galleries



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and traceries against the blue of the Venetian night.

There was never a side-show on the *Riva* that we did not interrupt our work to go and see it; whether it was the circus in the little tent, with the live pony, the most marvellous of all sights in Venice; or the acrobats tumbling on their square of carpet; or the blindfolded, toothless old fortune-teller, whose shrill voice I can still hear mumbling "*Una volta soltanta per Napoli!*" when she was asked if Naples, this coming summer, as the last, would be ravaged by cholera. She was right, for in the town, cleaned out of picturesqueness, cholera could not again do its work in the old wholesale fashion.

There was never an excursion to the Islands that we did not join it. To visit some of the further Islands was not so easy in those days, except for tourists with a fortune to spend on *gondolas*, and we were grateful to the occasional little steamboat that undertook to get us there, though with a crowd and noise and a brass band, for all the world like an excursion to Coney Island, and though most people, except the grateful natives, were obediently believing with Ruskin that it was the symbol of the degeneracy of Venice and would have thought themselves dis-

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graced forever if they were seen on it. But the Lagoon was as beautiful from the noisy, fussy little steamboat as from a *gondola*, the sails of the fishing boats touching it with as brilliant colour, the Islands lying as peacefully upon its shining waters, the bells of the many *campanili* coming as sweetly to our ears, the sky above as pure and radiant; and it mattered not how we reached the Islands, they were as enchanting when we landed.

One wonderful day was at Torcello, where nothing could mar the loveliness of its solitude and desolation, its old cathedral full of strange mosaics and stranger memories, the green space in front that was once a *Piazza* tangled with blossoms and sweet-scented in the May sunshine, the purple hills on the mainland melting into the pale sky. And a second day as wonderful was at Burano, with its rose-flushed houses and gardens and traditions of noise and quarrels, and the girls who followed the boat along the bank and pelted us with roses until Jobbins vowed he would go and live there—and he did, but a market boat brought him back in a week. And other excursions took us to Chioggia, the canals there alive with fishing boats and the banks with fishermen mending their nets; and to Murano, busy and beautiful both, with the throb of its glass furnaces

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and the peace of the fields where the dead sleep ; and again and again to the *Lido* where green meadows were sprinkled with daisies and birds were singing.

More wonderful were the nights, coming home, when the gold had faded from sea and sky, the palaces and towers of Venice rising low on the horizon as in a City of Dreams, the Lagoon turned by the moon into a sheet of silver, lights like great fireflies stealing over the water, ghostly *gondolas* gliding past,—then we were the real Lotus Eaters drifting to the only Lotus Land where all things have rest.

The fussy little steamboat, I found, could rock ambition to sleep as well as a *gondola*, and life seemed to offer nothing better than an endless succession of days and nights spent on its deck bound for wherever it might bear us. I understood and sympathized with the men who lay asleep all day in the sunshine on the *Riva* and who sang all night on the bridge below our windows. What is more, I envied them and wished they would take me into partnership. Were they not putting into practice the philosophy our ancient friend Davies had preached to me in Rome? But only the Venetian can master the secret of doing nothing with nothing to do it on,

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and if J. and I were to hope for figs with our bread, or even for bread by itself, we had to move on to the next place where work awaited us. And so the last of our nights in Venice came before spring had ripened into summer, and the last of our mornings when porters again scrambled for our bags, and we again stumbled after them up the long platform; and then there were again yells, but this time of "*Partenza*" and "*Pronti*," and the train hurried us away from the *Panada*, and the *Orientale*, and the Lagoon, to a world where no lotus grows and life is all labour.



IV  
NIGHTS  
IN LONDON





## IN LONDON

### I

**I** CANNOT remember how or why we began our Thursday nights. I rather think they began themselves and we kept them up to protect our days against our friends.

It was an unusually busy time with us—or perhaps I ought to say with me, for, to my knowledge, J. has never known the time that was anything else. After our years of wandering, years of hotels and rooms and lodgings, we had just settled in London in the first place we had ever called our own—the old chambers in the old Buckingham Street house overlooking the river; I was doing more regular newspaper work than I had ever done before or ever hope to do again; we were in the Eighteen-Nineties, and I need neither the magnifying glasses through which age has the reputation of looking backward, nor the clever young men of to-day who write about that delectable decade and no doubt deplore my indiscretion in being alive to write about it myself, to show me how very much more amusing and interesting life was then than now.

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There is no question that people, especially people doing our sort of work, were much more awake in the Nineties, much more alive, much more keen about everything, even a fight, or above all a fight, if they thought a fight would clear the air. Those clever young men, self-appointed historians of a period they know only by hearsay, may deplore or envy its decadence. But because a small clique wrote anæmic verse and bragged of the vices for which they had not the strength, because a few youthful artists invented new methods of expression the outsider did not understand, that does not mean decadence. A period of revolt against decadence, of insurrection, of vigorous warfare it seemed to me who lived and worked through it. The Yellow Nineties, the Glorious Nineties, the Naughty Nineties, the Rococo Nineties, are descriptions I have seen, but the Fighting Nineties would be mine. As I recall those stimulating days, the prevailing attitude of the artist in his studio, the author at his desk, the critic at his task, was that of Henley's Man in the Street:

Hands in your pockets; eyes on the pavement,  
Where in the world is the fun of it all?  
But a row—but a rush—but a face for your fist.  
Then a crash through the dark—and a fall.

## NIGHTS: IN LONDON

Scarcely an important picture was painted, an important illustration published, an important book written, an important criticism made, that it did not lead to battle. Few of the Young Men of the Nineties accomplished all the triumphant things they thought they could, but the one thing they never failed to do and to let the world know they were doing was to fight, and they loved nothing better—coats off, sleeves rolled up, arms squared. Whatever happened was to them a challenge. Whistler began the Nineties with his Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery and it was a rout for the enemy. The harmless portrait of Desboutin by Degas was hung at the New English Art Club and straightaway artists and critics were bludgeoning each other in the press. Men were elected to the Royal Academy, pictures were bought by the Chantrey Bequest; new papers and magazines were started by young enthusiasts with something to say and no place to say it in; new poets, yearning for degeneracy, read their poems to each other in a public house they preferred to re-christen a tavern; new printing presses were founded to prove the superiority of the esoteric few; new criticism—new because honest and intelligent—was launched; everything suddenly became *fin-*

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*de-siècle* in the passing catchword of the day borrowed from Paris; every fad of the Continent was adopted; but no matter what it might be, the incident, or work, or publication that roused any interest at all was the signal for the clash of arms, for the row and the rush. Everybody had to be in revolt, though it might not always have been easy to say against just what. I remember once, at the show of a group of young painters who fancied themselves fiery Independents, running across Felix Buhot, the most inflammable man in the world, and his telling me, with his wild eyes more aflame than usual, that he could smell the powder. He was not far wrong, if his metaphor was a trifle out of proportion to those very self-conscious young rebels. A good deal of powder was flying about in the Nineties, and when powder flies, whatever else may come of it, one thing sure is that nobody can sleep and most people want to talk.

I had not been in London a year before I knew that there the *café* was not the place to talk in. I have dreary memories of the first efforts J. and I, fresh from Italy, made to go on leading the easy, free-from-care life in restaurants and *cafés* we had led in Rome and Venice. But it was not to be done. The distances were too great,

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the weather too atrocious, the little restaurants too impossible, the big restaurants too beyond our purse, and the only real *café* was the *Café Royal*. At an earlier date Whistler had drawn his followers to it. In the Nineties Frederick Sandys was one of its most familiar figures. Even now, especially on Saturday nights, young men, in long hair and strange hats and laboriously unconventional clothes, are to be met there, looking a trifle solemnized by their share in so un-English an entertainment. For this is the trouble: The *café* is not an English institution and something in the atmosphere tells you right away that it isn't. It might, it may still, serve us for an occasion, its mirrors and gilding and red velvet pleasantly reminiscent, but for night after night it would not answer at all as the *Nazionale* had answered in Rome, the *Orientale* in Venice.

However, Buckingham Street made a good substitute as an extremely convenient centre for talk, and its convenience was so well taken advantage of that, at this distance of time, I am puzzled to see how we ever got any work done. J. and I have never been given to inhospitality, and we both liked the talk. But the day of reckoning came when, sitting down to lunch one morning, we realized that it was the first time we had



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eaten that simple meal alone for we could not remember how long. The lunch for which no preparation is made and at which the company is uninvited but amusing may be one of the most agreeable of feasts, but we knew too well that if we went on cutting short our days of work to enjoy it, we ran the risk of no lunch ever again for ourselves, let alone for anybody else.

To be interrupted in the evening did not matter so much, though our evenings were not altogether free of work—nor are J.'s even yet, the years proving less kind in moulding him to the indolence to which, with age, I often find myself pleasantly yielding. Our friends, when we stopped them dropping in by day, began dropping in by night instead, and one group of friends to whom Thursday night was particularly well adapted for the purpose gradually turned their dropping in from a chance into a habit until, before we knew it, we were regularly at home every Thursday after dinner.

The entertainment, if it can be called by so fine a name, always retained something of the character of chance with which it began. We sent out no invitations, we attempted no formality. Nobody was asked to play at anything or to listen to anything. Nobody was expected to



Mezzotint by Joseph Pennell

OUT OF OUR LONDON WINDOWS



## NIGHTS: IN LONDON

dress, though anybody who wanted to could—everybody was welcome in the clothes they wore, whether they came straight from the studio or a dinner. If eventually I provided sandwiches—in addition to the tobacco always at hand in the home of the man who smokes and the whiskey-and-soda without which an Englishman cannot exist through an evening—it was because I got too hungry not to need something to eat before the last of the company had said good-night. We did not offer even the comfort of space. Once the small dining-room that had been Etty's studio, and the not over-large room that was J.'s, and the nondescript room that was drawing-room and my workroom combined, were packed solid, there was no place to overflow into except the short, narrow entrance hall, and I still grow hot at the thought of what became of hats and coats if it also was filled. I can never forget the distressing evening when in the bathroom—which, with the ingenuity of the designer of flats, had been fitted in at the end of the narrow hall and was the reason of its shortness—I caught William Penn devouring the gloves of an artist's wife who I do not believe has forgiven him to this day; nor the still more distressing occasion when I discovered Bobbie, William's poor timid successor,

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curled up on a brand-new bonnet of feathers and lace.

But it was the very informality, so long as it led to no crimes on the part of our badly brought-up cats, that attracted the friends who were as busy and hard-working as ourselves,—this, and the freedom to talk without being silenced for the music that no talker wants to hear when he can listen to his own voice, or for the dances that nobody wants to watch if he can follow his own argument, or for the introductions that invariably interrupt at the wrong moment, or for the games and innumerable devices without which intelligent human beings are not supposed to be able to survive an evening in each other's company. The idle who play golf all day and bridge all night, who cannot eat in the short intervals between without music, believe that talk has gone out of fashion. My experience had been in Rome and Venice, was then in London, and is now, that men and women who have something to talk about are always anxious to talk about it, if only the opportunity is given to them, and the one attraction we offered was just this opportunity for people who had been doing more or less the same sort of work all day to meet and talk about it all night—the reason why, despite



Bust by Rodin

W. E. HENLEY





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heat and discomfort, despite meagre fare and the risk to hats and coats, Thursday after Thursday crowded our rooms to suffocation as soon as evening came.

### II

As, in memory, I listen to the endless talk of our Thursday nights, the leading voice, when not J.'s, is Henley's, which is natural since it was Henley, followed by his Young Men,—our name for his devoted staff always in attendance at his office and out of it,—who got so into the habit of dropping in to see us on Thursday night that we got into the habit of staying at home to see him. For Thursday was the night when the *National Observer*, which he was editing at the time, went to press and Ballantynes, the printers, were not more than five minutes away in Covent Garden. At about ten his work was over and he and his Young Men were free to do nothing save talk for the rest of the week if they chose—and they usually did choose—and Buckingham Street was a handy place to begin it in. Our rooms were already fairly well packed, pleasantly smoky, and echoing with the agreeable roar of battle when they arrived.

I like to remember Henley as I saw him then, especially if my quite superfluous feeling of re-

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sponsibility as hostess had brought me on some equally superfluous mission into the little hall at the moment of his arrival. As the door opened he would stand there at the threshold, his tall soft black hat still crowning his massive head, leaning on his crutch and stick as he waited to take breath after his climb up our three flights of stone stairs—"Did I really ever climb those stairs at Buckingham Street?"—he asked me the last time I saw him, some years later, at Worthing when he was ill and broken, and I have often marvelled myself how he managed it. But breathless as he might be, he always laughed his greeting. I cannot think of Henley as he was in his prime, to borrow a word that was a favourite with him, without hearing his laugh and seeing his face illuminated by it. Rarely has a man so hampered by his body kept his spirit so gay. He was meant to be a splendid creature physically and fate made of him a helpless cripple—who was it once described him as "the wounded Titan"? Everybody knows the story: he made sure that everybody should by telling it in his *Hospital Verses*. But everybody cannot know who did not know him how bravely he accepted his disaster. It seemed to me characteristic once when a young cousin of mine, a girl at the most



Painting by William Nicholson

W. E. HENLEY



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susceptible age of hero-worship, meeting him for the first time in our chambers and volunteering, in the absence of anybody else available, to fetch the cab he needed, thought his allowing her to go on such an errand for him the eccentricity of genius and never suspected his lameness until he stood up and took his crutch from the corner. There was nothing about him to suggest the cripple.

He was a remarkably handsome man, despite his disability, tall and large and fair, a noble head and profile, a shock of red hair, short red beard, keen pale blue eyes, his indomitable gaiety filling his face with life and animation, smoothing out the lines of pain and care. He was so striking in every way, his individuality so strangely marked that the wonder is the good portrait of him should be the exception. Nicholson, when painting him, was a good deal preoccupied with the big soft hat and blue shirt and flowing tie, feeling their picturesque value, and turned him into a brigand, a land pirate, to the joy of Henley, whom I always suspected of feeling this value himself and dressing as he did for the sake of picturesqueness. Simon Bussy seemed to see, not Henley, but Stevenson's caricature—the John Silver of *Treasure Island*, the cripple with the



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face as big as a ham. Even Whistler failed and never printed more than one or two proofs of the lithograph for which Henley sat. Rodin came nearest success, his bust giving the dignity and ruggedness and character of head and profile both. He and Nicholson together go far to explain the man.

Unfortunately there is no biography at all. Charles Whibley was to have written the authorized life, but the world still waits. Cope Cornford attempted a sketch, but scarcely the shadow of Henley emerges from its pages. Because he thundered and denounced and condemned and slashed to pieces in the *National Observer*, his contemporaries imagined that Henley did nothing anywhere at any time save thunder and denounce and condemn and slash to pieces and that he was altogether a fierce, choleric, intolerant, impossible sort of a person. The chances are few now realize that Henley was enough of an influence in his generation for it to have mattered to anybody what manner of man he was. A glimpse of him remains here and there. Stevenson has left the description of his personality, so strong that he was felt in a room before he was seen. His vigour and his manliness, survive in his work, but cannot quite explain the command-

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ing power he was in his generation, while neither he nor his friends have shewn, as it should be shewn, the other side to his character, the gay, the kindly side, so that I feel almost as if I owed it to his memory to put on record my impressions of my first meeting with him, since it was only this side he then gave me the chance to see.

I wonder sometimes why I had never met Henley before. When J. and I came to London he was editing the *Magazine of Art*, a little later he managed the *Art Journal*, and in both he published a number of J.'s drawings, and we had letters from him. We went to houses where he often visited. I remember hearing him announced once at the Robinsons' in Earl's Terrace, but Miss Mary Robinson, as she was then—Madame Duclaux as she is now—left everybody in the drawing-room while she went to see him downstairs, because of his lameness she said, but partly, I fancied, because she wanted to keep him to herself to discuss a new series of articles. She had just "come out" in literature and was as fluttered by her every new appearance in print as most girls are by theirs in a ball-room. In other houses, more than once I just missed him, I had never got nearer than business correspondence when he left London to edit the *Scots Observer*

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in Edinburgh, and he stayed there until the *Scots* became the *National Observer* with its offices in London.

I had heard more than enough about him in the meanwhile. The man who says what he believes to be the truth—the man who sits in, and talks from, the chair of the scorers—is bound to get himself hated, and Henley came in for his fair share of abuse. As somebody says, truth never goes without a scratched face.

But, like all men hated by the many, Henley inspired devotion in the few who, in his case, were not only devoted themselves but eager to make their friends devoted too. When he got back to London one of his Young Men, whom I do not see why I should not call Charles Whibley, insisted that J. and I must meet Henley first in the right way, that all our future relations with him depended upon it, and that this right way would be for him to ask Henley and ourselves, and nobody else, to dinner in his rooms.

When the evening came J. was off on a journey for work and I went alone to Fig-Tree House—the little old house, with a poor shabby London apology of a fig-tree in front, on Milbank Street by the riverside, which, with Henley's near Great College Street office round the corner, has dis-

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appeared in the fury of municipal town-disfigurement. A popular young man, in making his plans, cannot afford to reckon without his friends. Four uninvited guests, all men, had arrived before me, a fifth appeared as I did, and he was about the last man any of the party could have wanted at that particular moment—a good and old and intimate friend of Stevenson's, whose own name I am too discreet to mention but to whom, for reasons I am also too discreet to explain, I may give that of Michael Finsbury instead. Whoever has read *The Wrong Box* knows that Michael Finsbury enjoyed intervals of relaxation from work, knows also the nature of the relaxation. I had struck him at the high tide of one of these intervals. It was terribly awkward for everybody, especially for me. I have got now to an age when I could face that sort of awkwardness with equanimity, even with amusement. But I was young then, I had not lived down my foolish shyness, and I would have run if, in my embarrassment, I had had the courage,—would have run anyhow, I do believe, if it had not been for Henley. He seized the situation and mastered it. He had the reputation of being the most brutal of men, but he showed a delicacy that few could have sur-

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passed or equalled under the circumstances. He simply forced me to forget the presence of the objectionable Michael Finsbury, who at the other end of the table, I learned afterwards, was overwhelming his neighbours with a worse embarrassment than mine by finding me every bit as objectionable as I found him, and saying so with a frankness it was not in me to emulate.

The force Henley used with such success was simply his talk. He did not let my attention wander for one minute, so full of interest was all he had to say, while the enthusiasm with which he said it became contagious. I can remember to this day how he made me see a miracle in the mere number of the Velasquezes in the Prado, an adventure in every hansom drive through the London streets, an event in the dressing of the salad for dinner—how he transformed life into one long Arabian Nights' Entertainment, which is why I suppose it has always been my pride that his poem called by that name he dedicated to me. And so the evening that began as one of the most embarrassing in my experience ended as one of the most delightful, and the man whom I had trembled to meet because of his reputation with those who did not know him or understand intolerance in a just cause, won me over com-



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pletely by his kindness, his consideration, his charm.

Henley delighted in talk, that was why he talked so well. On Thursday night his crutch would be left with his big hat at the front door; then, one hand leaning on his cane, the other against the wall for support, he would hobble over to the chair waiting for him, usually by the window for he loved to look out on the river, and there, seldom moving except to stand bending over with both arms on the back of the chair, which was his way of resting, and always with his Young Men round him, the talk would begin and the talk would last until only my foolish ideas of civility kept me up to listen. As a woman, I had not then, nor have I yet, ceased to be astonished by man's passion for talking shop and his power of going on with it forever. My explanation of this special power used to be that the occupation supplied him by the necessity of keeping his pipe or his cigarette or his cigar going, with the inevitable interruptions and pauses and movement, and the excitement of the eternal hunt for the matches, made the difference and helped to keep him awake—there is nothing more difficult for me personally than to sit still long when my hands are idle, unless I



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am reading. But the women I know who smoke are not men's equals in the capacity for endless talk and the reason must be to seek elsewhere. He who divines it will have gone far to solving the tedious problem of sex.

Of Henley the talker, at least, one portrait remains. He was the original of Stevenson's *Burly*—the talker who would roar you down, bury his face in his hands, undergo passions of revolt and agony, letting loose a spring torrent of words. There was always a wild flood and storm of talk wherever Henley might be. He and his Young Men were the most clamorous group of the clamorous Nineties, though curiously their clamour seems faint in the ears of the present authorities on that noisy period. I have read one of these authorities' description of the London of the Nineties dressed in a powder puff, dancing beneath Chinese lanterns, being as wicked as could be in artificial rose-gardens. But had Henley and his Young Men suspected the existence of a London like that, they would have overthrown it with their voices, as Joshua overthrew the walls of Jericho with his trumpets. To other authorities the Nineties represent an endless orgy of societies—Independent Theatre Societies, Fabian Societies, Browning Societies,

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every possible kind of societies—but the *National Observer*, with its keen scent for shams, was as ready to pounce upon any and all of them for the good of their health, and to upbraid their members as cranks. It was a paper that existed to protest against just this sort of thing, as against most other things in a sentimental and artificial and reforming and ignorant world. It made as much noise in print as its editorial staff made in talk. The main function of criticism, according to Henley, was to increase the powers of depreciation rather than of appreciation, and what a healthy doctrine it is! As editor, he roared down his opponents no less lustily than he roared them down as talkers, and he had the strong wit and the strong heart that a man must have, or so it is said, to know when to tell the truth, which, with him, was always. He could not stand anything like affectation, or what people were calling æstheticism and decadence. To him, literature was literature and art was art, and not puling sentiment, affected posturing, lilies and sunflowers. The *National Observer* was the housetop from which he shouted for all who passed to hear that it did not matter twopence what the dabbler wanted to express if he could not express it, if he had not the technique of his

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medium at his fingers' ends and under his perfect control. A man might indulge in noble and beautiful ideas, and if he did not know how to put them in beautiful words or in beautiful paint or in beautiful sound, he was anathema, to be cast into outer darkness where there is gnashing of teeth—the doctrine of art for art's sake which the advanced young leaders of the new generation assure me is hopelessly out of date. Pretence of any kind was as the red rag; "bleat" was the unpardonable sin; the man who was "human" was the man to be praised. I would not pretend to say who invented this meaning for the word "human." Perhaps Louis Stevenson. As far back as 1880, in a letter from Davos describing the people "in a kind of damned hotel" where he had put up, I find him using it as Henley and his Young Men used it later:

Eleven English Parsons, all  
Entirely inoffensive; four  
True human beings—what I call  
Human—the deuce a cipher more.

Stevenson may even then have learned it from Henley. But however that may have been, "bleat" and "human" were the two words ever recurring like a refrain in the columns of the *National Observer*, ever the beginning and end

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of argument in the heated atmosphere of Buckingham Street.

In my memory, every Thursday night stands for a battle. Henley was then always at his best. His week's task was done, he was not due at his house in Addiscombe until the next day, for he always stayed in his Great College Street rooms from Monday to Friday—and the night was before him. At first I trembled a little at the smell of powder under my own roof, at turning our chambers into the firing line when friends came to them to pass a peaceful friendly evening—the Roman and Venetian *cafés* and restaurants of my earlier experience had been common ground on which combatants shared equal rights or, better, no rights at all. It was probably my old Philadelphia bringing up that made me question the propriety of the same freedom at home, that made me doubt its being quite “the thing” when J., who is an excellent fighter though a Philadelphian, met Henley in a clash of words. But I quickly got accustomed to the fight and enjoyed it and would not have had it otherwise.

Some friends who came, I must confess, enjoyed it less, especially if they were still smarting from a recent attack in the *National Observer*. There were evenings when it took a good deal of

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skilful manœuvring on everybody's part to keep Henley and his victims at a safe distance from each other. More than once in later days Walter Crane laughed with us at the memory of a Thursday night, just after he had been torn to pieces in the best *National Observer* style, when he gradually realized that he was being kept a prisoner in the corner into which he had been driven on his arrival, and he could not understand why until, breaking loose, he discovered Henley in the next room. Our alarm was not surprising, knowing as we did what a valiant fighter Crane was himself: as a socialist waving the red flag in the face of the world, as an artist forever rushing into the papers to defend his theories of art, as a man refusing to see his glory in passing by an offence. Not very long before, J. had exasperated him in print, by the honest expression of an opinion he did not happen to like, into threats of a big stick ready for attack the next time J. ventured upon his walks abroad. I need not add that J. did not bother to stay at home, that the big stick never materialized, that, though this was only the first of many fights between the two, Walter Crane was our friend to the end. But the little episode gives the true spirit of the Nineties.

I can still see Beardsley dodging from group



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to group to escape Henley, for he never recovered from the fright of the first encounter. He told me the story at the time. He had gone, by special appointment, to call on Henley, under his arm the little portfolio he was rarely without in those early days, ready and enchanted as he always was to show his drawings to anybody willing to look at them. As he went up the two flights of stairs to Henley's Great College Street rooms, he heard a voice, loud, angry, terrifying; at the top, through an open door, he saw a youth standing in the middle of the room listening in abject terror to a large red man at a desk whom he knew instinctively to be Henley;—one glance, and he turned and fled, down the stairs, into the street, the little portfolio under his arm, his pace never slackening until he got well beyond the Houses of Parliament, through the Horse Guards into the Park.

Other friends would not come at all on Thursday because of Henley, just as later more than one stayed away altogether because of Whistler. I was wretchedly nervous when they did come and brave a face-to-face meeting. Henley was not the sort of man to shirk a fight in the open. The principal reason for his unpopularity was just that habit of his of saying what he



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thought no matter where or when or to whom. He did not spare his friends, for he would not have kept them as friends had they not held some opinions worth his attacking, and they understood and respected him for it. Moreover, he said what he had to say in the plainest language. He roared his adversary down in good, strong, picturesque English, if that was any consolation, and with a splendidly rugged eloquence.

I wish I could remember the words as well as the roar. Henley's eloquence cannot be forgotten by those who ever once listened to him, but his wit was not, like Whistler's, so keen nor his thrust so direct that the phrase, the one word of the retort or the attack, was unforgettable. He had his little affectations of speech as of style, and they added to its picturesqueness. But it was what he said that counted, the talk itself that probably inspired more sound thought and sound writing than most talk heard in the England of the Nineties. But it fell unrecorded on paper and memory could not be trusted after all these years.

It is the greater pity because his books are few. He was poor when he started in life; almost at once he married; he was generous to a fault, and the generous man never yet lived who was

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not pursued by parasites; and as he was obliged to earn money and as his books were not of the stuff that makes the "best sellers," his criticism of life and art was expressed mainly in journalism.

Unfortunately, no just idea of the amount or the quality of his journalistic work is now to be had even from the files of the *National Observer*. He had a way of editing every article sent in to him until it became more than a fair imitation of his own. I can sympathize with his object—the artist's desire for harmony, for the unity of the paper as a whole. But if he succeeded, as he did, it was at the sacrifice of the force, the effect, the character of individual contributions, and nobody can now say for sure which were Henley's save those he re-published in book form. When articles I wrote for him appeared in print, it was an open question with me whether I had the right to call them mine and to take any money for them. His *Views and Reviews* gathered from the *National Observer* and other papers and periodicals, his three or four small volumes of verse, the plays he wrote with Stevenson, an anthology or two, a few books of his editing, are scarcely sufficient to explain to the present generation his importance in his day and why his influence

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made itself felt in literature as keenly as Whistler's in art, through all the movements and excitements and enthusiasms of the Nineties. The joyous wars that marked the beginning of my life in London, when not led by Whistler's "Ha! Ha!" were commanded by Henley's roar.

No man was ever more in need of a Boswell than Henley. Dr. Weir Mitchell once complained to me that in America nobody waited upon great men to report their sayings, while in England a young man was always somewhere near with a clean cuff to scribble them on. The enthusiast, with his cuff an impatient blank, never hung about Henley. Anyway, that was not what our Thursday evenings were for. Of all his Young Men who climbed up the Buckingham Street stairs with him on Thursday night and sat round him, his devoted disciples, until they climbed down the Buckingham Street stairs with him again, not one seems to have hit upon this useful way of proving his devotion.

I do not need to be told that this was no excuse for my not having my cuff ready. But, foolishly perhaps, I too often spent my Thursday nights oppressed by other cares. For one thing, I could seldom keep my weekly article on Cookery out of my mind. Without it Saturday's *Pall-Mall*,

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I felt, would lose its brilliancy and my bank account, I knew, would grow appreciably less, and Friday was my day for writing it. A serious question therefore was, how, if I did not get to bed until two or three or four o'clock on Friday morning, was I to sit down at my desk at nine and be the brilliant authority on Eating that I thought I was?

Another distraction grew out of my mistaken sense of duty as hostess, my feeling of responsibility in providing for all a share in the cheerful smell of powder and the stimulating sound of strife.

Also, men being at best selfish animals, their wives, whose love of battle was less, were often an anxiety.

These seemed big things at the time, though in retrospect they have dwindled into trifles that I had no business to let come between me and my opportunities to store up for future generations talk as brilliant as any on record. Of course I heard a great deal of it, and what I missed at home on our Thursday nights, I made up for at Henley's, and at friends' houses on many other occasions, and few can answer better than I for the quality of Henley's talk if I have forgotten the actual words. Its strength was its simple

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directness,—no posing, no phrasing, no attitudinizing for effect. This, I know, was always what most struck people when they first met him on our Thursday nights, especially Americans, for with us in America the man who has won the reputation of greatness too often seems afraid he will lose it if he does not forever advertise it by fireworks of cleverness and wit.

Henley's talk had too a strange mixture of the brutal and the tender, the rough and the fine, a blending of the highest things with what might seem to the ordinary man the most trivial. I asked two old friends of his the other day what they remembered best of him and of his talk. The answer of one was: "He was certainly the most stupendous Jove-like creature who ever lived, and I did not in the least mind his calling me Billy, which I have always hated from others." The second answer was: "He talked as he wrote, and I know of nothing more characteristic of his talking and his writing than that tragic poem in which, with his heart crying for the child he had adored and lost, he could compare himself to 'an old black rotter of a boat' past service, and could see, when criticised for it, nothing discordant in that slang *rotter* dropped into such verse!" A good deal of Henley is in



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both answers. This curious blend must have especially struck everybody who saw him and listened to him in his own home. I can recall summer Sunday afternoons at Addiscombe, with Henley sitting on a rug spread on the lawn behind his house, Mrs. Henley at his side, his eyes following with twinkling tenderness his little daughter as she ran backwards and forwards busy with the manifold cares of childhood, while all the time, to his Young Men gathered round him, he was thundering against the last book, or the last picture show, or the last new music, in language not unworthy of Defoe or Smollett, for Henley could call a spade not only a spade but a steam shovel when so minded. He could soar to the heights and dive to the depths in the same breath.

But Henley's talk was animated above all by the intense and virile love of life that I was so conscious of in him personally, that reveals itself in every line he wrote, and that is what I liked best about him. He was so alive, so exhilarated with the sense of being alive. The tremendous vitality of the man, that should have found its legitimate outlet in physical activity, seemed to have gone instead into his thought and his expression of it—as if the very fact that fate forced him to remain a looker-on had made him the



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more sensitive to the beauty, the joy, the challenge in everything life gave him to look at. He could wrest romance even out of the drear, drab hospital—there is another characteristic glimpse in one of Stevenson's letters, a picture of Henley sitting up in his hospital bed, his hair and beard all tangled, "talking as cheerfully as if he had been in a King's palace, or the great King's palace of the blue air."

His interest in life was far too large and all-embracing for him to be indifferent to the smallest or most insignificant part of it. He had none of the disdain for everyday details, none of the fear of the commonplace that oppresses many men who think themselves great. Nothing that lived came amiss to his philosophy or his pleasure. He could talk as brilliantly upon the affairs of the kitchen as upon those of state, he could appreciate gossip as well as verse, he could laugh over an absurdity as easily as he could extol the masterpiece. Romance for him was everywhere—in the slang of the cockney of the Strand as in a symphony by Berlioz, in 'Arriet's feathers as in the "Don Diegos" of the Prado—the mere sound of the title in his mouth became a tribute to the master he honoured above most—in the patter of the latest Lion-comique of the Halls as in the

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prose of Meredith or Borrow, in the disreputable cat stealing home through the dull London dawn as in the Romanticists emerging from the chill of Classicism—in everything, big and little, in which he felt the life so dear to him throbbing.

And he loved always the visible sign through which the appeal came. I have seen him lean, spell-bound, from our windows on a blue summer night, thrilled by the presence out there of Cleopatra's Needle, the pagan symbol flaunting its slenderness against river and sky, while in the distance the dome of St. Paul's, the Christian symbol, hung a phantom upon the heavens. His pleasure in the friendship of men of rank and family might have savoured of snobbishness had not one understood how much they stood for to him as symbols. I am sure he could fancy himself with these friends that same King of Babylon who thrills in the lover of his poem. I used to think that for him all the drama of *Admiral Guinea*, one of the plays he wrote with Stevenson, was concentrated in the tap-tap of the blind man's stick. In his *Hospital Verses*, his *London Voluntaries*, his every *Rhyme* and *Rhythm*, the outward sign is the expression of the emotion, the thought that is in him. And coming down to more ordinary matters—ordinary, that is, to

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most people—I shall never forget, once when I was in Spain and he wrote to me there, his decoration of my name on the envelope with the finest ceremonial prefix of the ceremonious Spanish code which to him represented the splendour of the land of Don Diego and Don Quixote.

It was this faculty of entering into the heart, the spirit of life and all things in it that made him the inspiring companion and friend he was, that widened his sympathies until he, whose intolerance was a byword with his contemporaries, showed himself tolerant of everything save sham and incompetence. The men who would tell you in their day, who will tell you now, of the great debt they owe to Henley, are men of the most varied interests, whose style and subject both might have been expected to prove a great gulf to separate them. Ask Arthur Morrison straight from the East End, or FitzMaurice Kelly fresh from Spain; ask W. B. Blakie preoccupied with the modern development of the printed book, or Wells adrift in a world of his own invention; ask Kipling steeped in the real, or Barrie lost in the Kail-Yard; ask Kenneth Grahame on his Olympian heights or George S. Street deep in his study of the prig—ask any one of these men and a score besides what Henley's sympathy,

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Henley's outstretched hand, meant to him, and some idea of the breadth of his judgment and taste and helpfulness may be had. Why he could condescend even to me when, in my brave ignorance, I undertook to write that weekly column on Cookery for the *Pall-Mall*. He it was who gave me Dumas's *Dictionnaire de la Cuisine*, the corner-stone of my collection of cookery books—a fact in which I see so much of Henley that I feel as if the stranger to him who to-day takes the volume down from my shelves and reads on the fly-leaf the simple inscription, "To E. R. P. d.d. W. E. H.," in his little crooked and crabbed writing, must see in it the eloquent clue to his personality that it is to me.

### III

I have said that Henley seldom came to us—as indeed he seldom went anywhere or, for that matter, seldom stayed at home—without a contingent of his Young Men in attendance. I do not believe I could ever have gone to his rooms in Great College Street, or to his house at Addiscombe, or in later, sadder days to the other, rather gloomy, house on the riverside at Barnes,—turned into some sort of college the last time I passed, with a long bare students' table in the

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downstairs dining-room where I had been warmed and thrilled by so much exhilarating talk,—that some of his Young Men were not there before me or did not come in before I left. In London, on his journeys to and fro, they surrounded him as a bodyguard. If on those old Thursday nights, his was the loudest voice, theirs played up to it untiringly. There were no half measures about them. As warriors in the cause of art and literature, they reserved nothing from their devotion to their leader, they exhausted every possibility of that form of flattery usually considered the greatest. They fought Henley's battles with hardly less valour, hardly milder roaring. On Thursday, they had been working with him all day and all evening, they probably had lunched together, and dined together, and yet so far from showing any desire to separate on their arrival in our rooms, they immediately grouped themselves again round Henley.

It was curious, anyway, how strong the tendency was with all the company to break up into groups. Work was the common bond, but there was also a special bond in each different kind of work. On my round as hostess I was sure to find the writers in one corner, the artists in another, the architects in a third—though to this



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day it is a question with me why we should have had enough architects to make a group and, more puzzling, why, having them, they should have been so unpopular, unless it was because of their air of prosperity and respectability, always as correct in appearance as if there was a possible client at the door. I can still recall the triumphant glee, out of all proportion to the cause, of one of Henley's Young Men the Thursday night he came to tell me that all the architects were safe out of the way in the studio, and "I have shut both doors," he added, "and now that we are rid of them we can talk." As if any of Henley's Young Men under any circumstances ever did anything else.

Some of Henley's staff, if I remember, never came to us, others came only occasionally, but a few failed us as rarely as Henley himself. The Thursday night was the exception that did not see Charles Whibley at Henley's right hand even as he was in the pages of the *National Observer*, not merely ready for the fight but provoking it, insisting upon it, forcing it, boisterous in battle, looking like an undergraduate, talking like a past-master of the art of invective, with a little stammer that gave point to his lightest commonplace. Rarely lagging very far behind came Marriott



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Watson, young, tall, blonde, good-looking—a something exotic, foreign in the good looks that I put down to New Zealand, for I suppose New Zealand as well as America has produced a type—not quite so truculent in talk as in print, more inclined to fight with a smile. A third was Wilfred Pollock, forgotten save by his friends I am afraid; and a fourth, Vernon Blackburn, who began life as a monk at Fort Augustus and finished it as a musical critic, he too I fear scarcely more than a name; and a fifth, Jack Stuart, and a sixth, Harold Parsons, and a seventh, and an eighth, and I can hardly now say how many more long since dead, now for me vague ghosts from out that old past so overflowing with life.

When William Waldorf Astor bought the *Pall Mall Gazette* and started the weekly *Pall Mall Budget* and the monthly *Pall Mall Magazine*, he presented Henley with two or three new Young Men and added to our company on Thursday nights, little as he had either of these achievements in view. His plunge into newspaper proprietorship was one of the newspaper ventures that counted for most in the Nineties. It was a venture inclining to amateurism in detail, but run on business, not romantic, lines and therefore it was less talked about than those purely

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amateur plunges into journalism which gave the Nineties so much of their picturesqueness. But all the same, we saw revolution in it, the possibility of wholesale regeneration, the inauguration of a new era, when "sham" would be exposed, and "Bleat" silenced, and art grow "Human" once more. In the *Budget* and the *Magazine* it was likewise to be proved that America and France were not alone in understanding and valuing the art of illustration:—vain hopes!

Henley and his Young Men rejoiced in a new sphere for fighting, certain of a brilliant victory, since they were to have a share in the command. Astor, with a fine fling for independence—his only one in public—or else with that old gentlemanly dream of a newspaper "written by gentlemen for gentlemen," had captured his editors in regions where editors are not usually hunted—Henry Cust, heir to a title, for the *Gazette*, Lord Frederick Hamilton, his title already inherited, for the *Magazine*. Fleet Street shrugged its shoulders, laughed a little, not believing title and rank to have the same value in journalism as in society. Cust, to do him justice, agreed with Fleet Street, and, knowing that he was without experience, had the sense to appeal for help to those with it. By good luck he went to Henley,

who was not free to do much for the paper save give it his advice, offer it those of his Young Men whom he could spare, and take under his wing the new Young Men it invented for itself. When new enthusiasts fell into Henley's train, it was never long before they followed him to Buckingham Street on Thursday nights.

I could scarcely label as anybody's Young Man Iwan-Müller, huge, half Russian, half English, all good comrade, who had come up from Manchester and the editorship of a leading paper there to be Cust's Assistant Editor. He was nearly Henley's contemporary, but he did not, for such a trifle as age, let any one of Henley's Young Men exceed him in devotion, and his laugh became the unfailing accompaniment of Henley's talk, so much so that I am convinced if Henley still leads the talk in the land beyond the grave, Iwan-Müller still punctuates it with the big bracing laugh that was as big as himself.

At the other extreme, younger than the youngest of the Young Men he joined, came George W. Steevens, fresh from Oxford, Balliol Prize Scholar, shy and carrying it off, in the Briton's way, with appalling rudeness and more appalling silence. I remember J., upon whose nerves as well as mine this silence got, taking me apart one



Photograph by Frederick Hollyer

IWAN-MÜLLER AND GEORGE W. STEEVENS



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Thursday evening to tell me that if that young Oxford prig was too superior to talk to anybody, why then he was too superior to come to us at all, and he must be made to understand it. Eventually he learned to talk, with us anyway—he was always a silent man with most people. And I got to know him well, to like him, to admire him, —to respect him too through the long summer when his friends were doing their best to dissuade him from his proposed marriage with a woman many years older than he. The men of the *National Observer* and the *Pall Mall* were such keen fighters that they could not be kind or sentimental—and they grew maudlinly sentimental over Steevens's engagement—without a fight for it. They thought he was making a mistake, forgetting that it was his business, not theirs, if he was. He fought alone against them, but he held his place like a man and won. Our Thursday nights had come to an end before he went to America, to Germany, to Khartoum with Kitchener, to South Africa, where he passed into the great silence that no protest of ours, or any man's can break. If his work was overrated, he himself as I knew him was as kind and brave as in Henley's verse to his memory.

Others of the same group, the writers' group,



who flit across the scene in my memory are less intimately associated with Henley. Harold Frederic wrote for him occasionally—wrote few things, indeed, more amusing than his *Observations in Philistia*, a satire first published in the *National Observer*—but his chief business was the novel and the *New York Times* correspondence. He was an able man, something more than the typical clever American journalist, a writer of books that deserve to be remembered but that have hardly outlived him. He was an amusing companion, the sort of man it was delightful to run across by chance in unexpected places, for which reason my most agreeable recollections of him are not in Buckingham Street but in the streets and *cafés* of Berlin and Vienna that summer he was studying Jews in Southeastern Europe, and first knew there were Jews in Vienna when J., who afterwards began to study them for himself, introduced him to the *Juden Gasse*. He liked a good dinner, and gave us more than one, and he was an amusing talker over it and also on our Thursday nights until he got to the stage he always did get to of telling tales of his boyhood when he carried milk to the big people in his part of the Mohawk Valley, was dazzled by his first vision of Brussels carpet on their floors, and

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determined to have Brussels carpet on his own before he was many years older, and I can answer for it that, by the time I knew him, his house was all Brussels carpet from top to bottom. They were most creditable tales and entertaining too at a first hearing, but they staled, as all tales must, with repetition.

S. R. Crockett never wrote anything for Henley. Henley would have been outraged by the bare suggestion, and Crockett the writer was never handled with the gloves by Henley's Young Men in the *National Observer*. But with Crockett himself they had no quarrel. We all liked him—a large red and white Scotchman, the Scots strong in every word he spoke, hustling us all off for a fish dinner at Greenwich on the strength of his first big cheque for royalties; or as happy to spend the evening sitting on our floor and diverting William Penn with the ball of paper on the end of a string that William never wearied of pursuing, partly for his amusement, partly because, with his innate politeness, he knew it contributed to ours.

I cannot imagine a Thursday night without Rosamund Marriott-Watson,—Graham R. Tomson as she was then,—beautiful, reminiscent of Rossetti in her tall, willowy slimness, with her

long neck like a column and her great halo of black hair and her big brown eyes, appealing, confiding, beseeching. Fashion as she, the poetess, extolled it week by week in the *National Observer*, became a poem with a stately measure in frocks and hats, a flowing rhythm in every frill and furbelow. I lost sight of her later, for reasons neither here nor there, but it pleases me to know that not many months before her death she looked back to those years as her happiest when weekly, almost daily, she was going up and down the Buckingham Street stairs which her ghost, she said, must haunt until they go the way of too many old stairs leading up to old London chambers. Violet Hunt was almost as faithful. And both contributed, as I did, a weekly column—mine that amazing article on cookery—to the *Pall Mall's* daily *Wares of Autolycus*, daily written by women and I daresay believed by us to be the most entertaining array of unconsidered trifles that any Autolycus had ever offered to any eager world. Graham Tomson was even moved to commemorate our collaboration in verse the inspiration of which is not far to seek, but of which all I remember now is the beginning:

O, there's Mrs. Meynell and Mrs. Pennell,  
There's Violet Hunt and me!

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for Mrs. Meynell contributed a fourth column, though she never contributed her presence to Buckingham Street.

Once or twice, George Moore hovered from group to group, his childlike eyes of wonder protruding, wide open, and his ears open too, no doubt, for, if I can judge from his several books of reminiscences, his ears have rarely been closed to talk going on about him. After reading the Irish series I should suspect him not only of well-opened ears but of an inexhaustible supply of cuffs safely stored up his sleeves. Bernard Shaw honoured us occasionally, but I have learned that, bent as he is upon talking about himself, whatever he has to say, he grows more fastidious when others talk about him and say what they have to. Now and then, Henry Norman, journalist, his title and seat in Parliament yet to come, dropped in. Now and then Miss Preston and Miss Dodge came, both in London to finish in the British Museum the studies begun in Rome. Rarely a week passed that James G. Legge was not with us, then deep in his work at the Home Office but full of joy in everything that was most joyful in the Nineties—its fights, its books, its prints, its posters. And I might name many besides, some forgotten, some dead, some seen no

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more by me, life being often more cruel than death in the separations and divisions it makes. But two voices above the others are almost as persistent in my ears as Henley's—the voices of Bob Stevenson and Henry Harland.

### IV

I have no fancy for nicknames in any place or at any time. I have suffered too much from my own. But I dislike the familiarity of them above all in print. And yet, I could no more call Bob Stevenson anything save Bob than I could venture to abbreviate the Robert or the Louis of his cousin. He had been given in baptism a more formal name—in fact, he had been given three of unquestioned dignity: Robert Alan Mowbray. But I doubt if anybody had ever known him by them or if he had ever used them himself. When he wrote he signed his fine array of initials, and when he was not R. A. M. S., he was Bob.

It seems to me now a curious chance, as well as a piece of good luck, that the two most eloquent of the company in Louis Stevenson's *Talk and Talkers* should have come to us on our Thursday nights, for Bob was the Spring-Heeled Jack, “the





Painting by Himself

"BOB" STEVENSON





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loud, copious, and intolerant talker'' of that essay just as Henley was the Burly.

He was not more spring-heeled in his talk than in evading capture for it. In his later years he made few visits. If we wanted him we had to gather him up by the wayside and bring him home with us. The newspaper work I was doing then took me the rounds of the London galleries on press days and, as he was the art critic of the *Pall Mall*, I was continually coming across him busy about the same work in Bond Street or Piccadilly. Nothing pleased me better than to meet him on these occasions, for he could make the dull show that I, in my dull way, was finding dull the most entrancing entertainment in London. His every visit to a gallery was to him an adventure and every picture a romance, and the best of it for his friends was that he would willingly share the inspiration which he, but nobody else, could find in the most uninspiring canvas, an inspiration to criticism that is, not to admiration—he never wavered in his allegiance to the "Almighty Swells" of Art. Once he began to talk I did not care to have him stop, and I would say, "Why not come to Buckingham Street with me? You have not seen J. for a long while." He would vow he couldn't, he must get back to

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Kew to do his article. I would insist a little, he would waver a little, and at last he would agree to a minute's talk with J., excusing himself to himself by protesting that Buckingham Street was on his way to the Underground, as it was if he chose to go out of his way to make it so. Before he knew it, the minute had stretched out to our dinner hour when he was persuaded that he would save time by dining with us, as he must dine somewhere; if he went right afterwards, he could still be back at Kew in plenty of time to finish his article for the last post.

Of course he never did go right afterwards—what talker ever did go right anywhere immediately after dinner when the real talk is only beginning? Presently people would filter in and now, well adrift on the flood of his own eloquence, nothing could interrupt him and he was the last to leave us, the later it grew the more easily induced to stay because he knew that the last train and the last post and all the last things of the day had gone and that he must now wait for the first things of the morning.

If I could talk like Bob Stevenson I would not be interrupted either. Greater excitement could not be had out of the most exciting story of adventure, and I do not believe he knew until

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he got to the end any more where his talk was going to lead him than the reader knows how the story is going to turn out until the last chapter is reached. Louis Stevenson described certain qualities of his talk, but made no effort to give the talk itself, and in Bob's case, as in Henley's, it was the talk itself that counted. There was no acting in it as in Henley's or in Whistler's—no burying of his head in his hands and violent gestures—no well-placed laugh and familiar phrase. The talk came in a steady stream, laughter occasionally in the voice, but no break, no movement, no dramatic action—the sanest doctrine set forth with almost insane ingenuity, for he was always the “wild dog outside the kennel” who wouldn't imitate and hence kept free, as Louis Stevenson told him; extraordinary things treated quite as a matter of course; brilliant flashes of imbecility passed for cool well-balanced argument; until often I would suddenly gasp, wondering into what impossible world I had strayed after him. And he would tell the most extravagant tales, he would confide the most paradoxical philosophy, the most topsy-turvy ethics, with a fantastic seriousness, never approached except in the Arabian Nights of Prince Florizel for the puppets of whose ad-

ventures, as for Spring-Heeled Jack, he was the sitter. It was a delightful accomplishment, but dangerous when applied to actual life. I cannot forget his advice once to a friend on the verge of a serious step that might sink him into nobody could foretell what social quagmire. Bob could see in it only the adventure and the joy of adventure, not the price fate was bound to demand for it. To him the mistake was the unlit lamp, the ungirt loin—the adventure lost—and, life being what it is, I am not sure that he was not right.

I think his talk struck me as the more extraordinary because he looked so little like it. In the Nineties he had taken to the Jaegers that usually stand for vegetarianism, teetotalism, hygiene—all the drab things of life. He wore even a Jaeger hat and Jaeger boots—as complete an advertisement for Jaeger as old Joseph Finsbury was for his Doctor. No costume could have seemed so altogether out of character with the fantastic, delightful, extravagant creature inside of it, though, really, none could have been more in character. It had always been Bob's way to play the game of life by dressing the part of the moment. Before I met him I had been told of his influence over Louis Stevenson, whose

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debt to him for ideas and conceits was said to be immeasurable, and nobody who knew Bob has doubted it. I feel convinced that Louis owed to him also his touch of the fantastic, the unusual, in dress, since it belonged so entirely to Bob and was no less entirely in keeping with his attitude towards the universe and his place in it—his tendency of always probing the real for the romantic.

Knowing one cousin and the books of the other, I should say it was Bob who, in their childhood, originated the drama of the Lantern-Bearers and the evil-smelling lantern under the great coat, symbol of adventure and daring—that it was Bob who, in their gay youth, evolved the black flannel shirts to which they owed the honour of being, with Lord Salisbury, the only Britons ever refused admission to the Casino at Monte Carlo, and which were worn by the Stennis Brothers in *The Wrecker*,—that it was Bob who impressed upon Louis the importance of being dressed for the scene until he surpassed himself in his amazing get-up for the *Epilogue to an Inland Voyage*. Bob's own disguises rarely got into print, but in Will Low's *Chronicle of Friendships* there is a photograph of him in his student days, figuring as a sort of brigand of old-fashioned comic opera, that shows he did not from the be-



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ginning shirk the obligations he imposed upon others. I remember a huge ring, inherited from his father to whom the Czar had given it for engineering services in Russia, which he kept for formal occasions so that when I saw it covering his finger, almost his hand, at the dinner to which we had both been invited, I understood that to him the occasion was one of ceremony and he never failed to regulate his conduct accordingly. I was glad the ring did not appear on our Thursday nights, so much freer of formality, and therefore more amusing, was he without it. The large perfection of his Jaegers in his last years was no less symbolic; in them he was dressed for the rôle of middle age which he, who had the gift of eternal youth, had already reached when I first knew him. It was a rôle to which, at the time, I attributed his concern about his health—his anxiety to know if we, any of us, had influenza before he would come home with me, his rush from the room or the house at a sniff or a sneeze. The truth is Bob shared Henley's love of the visible sign, or it may be nearer the truth to say that he shared his own love of it with Henley and his cousin who rarely, either of them, wrote anything in which it is not felt.

But Henley loved the visible sign for itself—

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the romance was actually in the tap-tap of the blind man's staff, in the pagan obelisk towering above the Christian river. Bob loved the visible sign for the hint it gave to his imagination, the adventure upon which it sent him galloping. He could build up a romance out of anything and nothing—he was the modern Scheherezade, but, as time went on, with nobody to repeat his stories. He could have made the fortune of any number of young men with their cuffs ready, but the only young man who ever did use his cuff was Louis Stevenson when they were young together. Bob had not the energy to put down his stories himself—he would not have written a word for publication had he not been forced to. For him the romance would have been lost in the labour of recording it, and, anyway, he was always consistent in not doing more work than he was obliged to in order to live. He had not the talent for combining, or identifying, his pleasure with his work. Painting was the profession for which he had been trained, but with it he amused himself and, as far as I know, never made a penny out of it. When he talked he would have lost his joy in the invention, the fabrication, had he thought he must turn it to profit. Of the curious twist of his imagination there remains but the

faint reflection here and there in Prince Florizel and the romantic adventurers swaggering and talking splendid nonsense through the earlier tales by Louis Stevenson, whose books grew less and less fantastic as his path and Bob's spread wider apart. Even in the earlier tales Bob will not be discovered by future generations who have lost the key.

For the sake of posterity, if not for my own, I would have been wiser on Thursday nights to think less of my next morning's article than of his inventions. As it is, I retain merely a general impression and an occasional detail of his talk. I am glad I remember, for one thing, his unfailing prejudice in favour of his friends, so amiable was the side of his character it revealed—though it revealed also his weakness as critic. He had a positive genius for veiling prosaic facts with romance where the people he liked were concerned. How often have we laughed at his amiability to a painter of the commonplace who had happened to be his fellow-student in Paris, whose work, as a consequence, his friendly imagination filled with the fine things that to us were conspicuously missing, and whose name he dragged into every criticism he wrote, even into his Mono-

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graph on Velasquez, nor could he be laughed, or argued out of it.

And I am glad I remember another trick of his imagination, though it was like to end in disaster for us all, so equally characteristic was it of his genius in weaving romance from prose. He was talking one evening of wine, upon which he had large—Continental—ideas, declaring he would not have it in his house unless all his family, including the servants, could drink it without stint and also without thought of expense—though, if I am not mistaken, his household staff consisted chiefly of a decent old Scotch-woman who would have scorned wine as a device of the foreigner. The triumphant ring of his voice is still in my ears as he announced that he had found a merchant who could provide him with just the wine he wanted, good, pure, light, white or red, an ordinary brand for sevenpence a bottle, a superior brand for eightpence.

The marvel of it all was that we believed in that wine and when the company left for home, the merchant's address was in almost everybody's pocket. It was not a bad wine in the sample bottles J. and I received a day or two later, nothing much to boast of, but harmless. For the further cheapness promised we next ordered it

by the case, one of red and one of white—a rare bargain we thought. But in the end it was the most expensive wine it has ever been our misfortune to invest in. For when it came in cases it was so potent that nobody could drink as much as a glass without going to sleep. I never had it analyzed, but, after a couple of bottles, I did not dare to put it on the table again, or to use it even for cooking or as vinegar. To balance our accounts, we did without wine of any kind, or at any price, for many a week to come. But we had our revenge. In the course of a few months Bob's wine merchant was summoned before the magistrate for manufacturing Bordeaux and Burgundies out of Greek currants and more reprehensible materials in the backyard of his unpretending riverside house, and it was one of our Thursday night fellow victims who had the pleasure of exposing him in the *Daily Chronicle*. Bob did not share our resentment. He had his pleasure in the charm his imagination gave to every drop of the few bottles he drank and managed not to die of.

I began to notice in the galleries and on Thursday nights that Bob became more and more engrossed in the question of his health and quicker to fly at a sniff or a sneeze. The time came when



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no persuasion could bring him home with me. He described symptoms rather than pictures, his interest in anything in the shape of paint weakened. I fancied that he was romancing, that he was playing the hypochondriac as part of his rôle of middle-age, and I thought it a pity. It might provide a new entertainment for him, but it deprived us of the entertainment of his company. Then I hardly met him at all, or if I did he was too nervous to linger before each painting or drawing, to gossip about it and everything under the sun. He would walk through the galleries with one leg dragging a little—the visible sign, I would say to myself, amused to see that he could turn romance into reality as easily as reality into romance. He would start for Kew right off, without any loitering, without any delicious pretending that he was going in the very next train and then not going until the very next train meant the very next day. But before long I learned that there was no romance about it, that it was grim reality, the grimmer to me because I had taken it so lightly. His illness was mere rumour at first, for few people went to his house in far Kew to see him. It was more than rumour when he ceased altogether to appear in the galleries, for we knew he was dependent upon



art criticism for his butter, if not for most of his bread. I had not got as far as belief in his illness before the news came that he had set out upon the greatest adventure of all and that no more would Buckingham Street be transfigured in the light of his romancing, glorified by his inexhaustible fancy. I owed him much: the charm of the personality of "this delightful and wonderful creature" in Henley's words of him, pleasure from his talk, stimulus from his criticism, and I wish I had had the common sense to do what I could to make him live as a pleasure and a stimulus to others. My mistake on our Thursday nights was to keep my cuff clean, my note-book empty.

## V

In the case of Henry Harland my conscience makes me no such reproach. If ever a man became his own Boswell it was he, though I do not suppose anything was further from his mind when he sat down to write. But as he talked, so he wrote—he could not help himself—and all who have read the witty, gay, whimsical, fantastic talk of his heroes and heroines, especially in his last three books, have listened to him. He, no less than his Adrian Willes—even if quite another man was the model—never understood



Sketch by Aubrey Beardsley

HENRY HARLAND



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how it was possible for people to be bored. Flaubert once said in a letter, "Life is so hideous that the only way of enduring it is to avoid it." But Harland believed in plunging into it head-long and getting everything that is to be got out of it. He had eyes to see that "life is just one sequence of many-coloured astonishments," and the colours were the gayer when he came to our Thursday nights because he was still so young.

He and Mrs. Harland had been in London only a few years, his career as Sydney Luska was behind him, his career as Henry Harland was before him, he was full of life, energy, enthusiasm, deep in long novels, busy for the *Daily Chronicle*, writing as hard as he talked, and he talked every bit as hard as Bob Stevenson.

Like Bob, he seemed to love talk more than anything, but he must have loved work as Bob never loved it, for he put the quality of his talk into what he wrote. Bob Stevenson's writing never suggested his talk. I might find his point of view and his amiable prejudices in his criticism and his books—only he could have written his *Velasquez* quite as he wrote it—but nowhere do I find a touch, a trace of the Lantern-Bearer or Prince Florizel or the Young Man with the Cream Tarts. But I never get far away from Harland

in his novels. I re-read them a short time ago, and they were a magic carpet to bear me straight back to Buckingham Street, and the crowded, smoky rooms overlooking the river, and the old years when we were all young together.

A delightful thing about Harland was that he did not care to monopolize the talk, to talk everybody else down. On the contrary, I doubt if he was ever happier than when he roused, provoked, stimulated everybody to talk with him. I remember in particular an evening when J. and I were dining with him and Mrs. Harland at their Kensington flat, and Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Gosse were there, and Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Fisher—Fisher was then editor of the *Daily Chronicle* and Mrs. Fisher was still Adrienne Dayrolles on the stage—and Louis Austen, a handy man of journalism, and when, happening to turn for a minute from Harland by whom I was sitting, and to look round the table, I found I was the only one of the party not talking—and we had got no farther than the fish! But I flatter myself I have few rivals as an accomplished listener.

Often Harland had the floor to himself simply because everybody else wanted to listen too. When what he calls in one of his books “the restorative spirit of nonsense” descended upon

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him, his talk could whisk off the whole Thursday night crowd, before they knew it, to that delectable Land of Nonsense to which he was an inspired guide. Nobody understood better how to set up the absurd and the impossible in the garb of truth. An old admirer of his reminded me not long since of a tale he used to tell, almost with tears in his voice, of the *petit patissier* who was hurrying through the streets of Paris to deliver *brioche*s and tarts to customers and who, crossing the Boulevards, was knocked down by a big three-horse omnibus. And as the crowd collected and the *sergent-de-ville* arrived, he was seen painfully and deliberately freeing his one uninjured arm, feeling carefully in pocket after pocket, and, as he drew his last breath, holding up triumphantly the exact number of francs the Parisian on foot then had to pay for venturing rashly to get in the way of the Paris driver. And Harland told it all with such eloquence that it was some minutes before those who listened realised he was laughing and began to laugh with him. And the tale was typical of many others he loved to tell. As his talk led the way to the Land of Nonsense, so he himself could of a sudden whirl us all off to a restaurant, or a park, or an excursion we had not thought of an hour, a



minute before. Many a time, instead of sitting solemnly at home reading or working as we had meant to, we would be going down the river in a penny steamboat, or drinking coffee at the *Café Royal* or tea in Kensington Gardens—but Harland as an inspired guide was at his best in Paris I always thought, perhaps because in Paris he had so much larger scope than in London.

He impressed one as a man who never tired, or who never gave in to being tired, either at work or at play—a man who, knowing his days would be few on this earth, found each fair as it passed and, if he could not bid it stay, was at least determined to fill it as full as it would hold. There was no resisting his restless energy when with him, and it was because he could so little resist it himself, that he was continually seeking new outlets—new forms for its expression. He had just the temperament to take up with the mode of the Nineties that drove the Young Men to asserting themselves and upholding their doctrines in papers and magazines of their own. The pedant may trace the fashion back to the *Hobby-Horse* of the Eighties, or, in a further access of pedantry to the *Germ* of the early Fifties. He may follow its growth as late as the *Blast* of yesterday and *The Gypsy* of to-day. But I do

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not have to go further than my book shelves, I have only to look and see there the *Dial* and the *Yellow Book* and the *Savoy* and the *Butterfly* and the *Pageant* and the *Dome* and the *Evergreen*, each with its special train of memories and associations, and I know better than the greatest pedant of them all that the fashion, no matter when it began, no matter when it may end, belongs as essentially to the Nineties as the fashion for the crinoline belongs to the Sixties. Harland was not original in wanting to set up a pulpit for himself—the originality was in the design for it. The *Yellow Book* was not like any other quarterly from which any other young man or group did his preaching.

### VI

Harland shared his pulpit. He would not have found the same design for it without Beardsley, nor would our Thursday nights, where a good deal of that design was thought out and talked out, have been the same without Beardsley. I would find it hard, even had there been no *Yellow Book*, not to remember Harland and Beardsley together. For it was from Mrs. Harland that we first heard of the wonderful youth, unknown still, an insignificant clerk in some In-

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surance Company, who made the most amazing drawings—it was she who first sent him to us that J. might look at his work and help him to escape from the office he hated and from the toils of Burne-Jones and the Kelmscott Press in which he was entangled.

He came, the first time, one afternoon in the winter dusk—a boy, tall and slight, long narrow pale clean-shaven face, hair parted in the middle and hanging over his forehead, nose prominent, eyes alight, certain himself of the worth of his drawings, too modest not to fear that other artists might not agree with him. The drawings in his little portfolio were mostly for the *Morte d' Arthur*, with one or two of those, now cherished by the collector, that have a hint of the Japanese under whose influence he momentarily passed. J. enjoys the reputation, which he deserves, of telling the truth always, no matter how unpleasant to those to whom he tells it. Truth to Beardsley was pleasant and his face was radiant when he left us. J. has also the courage of his convictions, and all he said to Beardsley he repeated promptly to the public in the first number of *The Studio*, a magazine started not as a pulpit but as a commercial enterprise—started, however, at the right moment to be kindled into life



Photograph by Frederick H. Evans

AUBREY BEARDSLEY



## NIGHTS: IN LONDON

and steered toward success by the enthusiasm and the energy of the Young Men of the Nineties.

Beardsley was bound to become known whether articles were written about him or not. But J.'s was the first and made recognition come the sooner. The heads of many young men grow giddy with the first success; at the exultant top of the winding stair that leads to it, they no longer see those who gave them a hand when they balanced on the lowest rung. But Beardsley was not made that way. He kept his head cool, his eyesight clear. He never forgot. Gratitude coloured the friendship with us that followed, even in the days when he was one of the most talked about men in London. He knew that always by his work alone he would be judged at Buckingham Street, and to J. he brought his drawings and his books for criticism. He brought his schemes as well, just as he brought the youth not only of years but of temperament to our Thursday nights. He came almost as regularly as Henley and Henley's Young Men, adding his young voice to the uproar of discussion, as full of life as if he too, like Harland, grudged a minute of the years he knew for him were counted. In no other house where it was my pleasure to meet him did he seem to me to show to



such advantage. In his own home I thought him overburdened by the scheme of decoration he had planned for it. In many houses to which he was asked he was amiable enough to assume the pose expected of him. The lion-hunters hoped that Beardsley would be like his drawings. Strange, decadent, morbid, bizarre, weird, were adjectives bestowed upon them, and he played up to the adjectives for the edification or mystification of the people who invented them and for his own infinite amusement. But with us he did not have to play up to anything and could be just the simple, natural youth he was—as simple and natural as I have always found the really great, more interested in his work than most young men, and keener for success.

I like to insist upon his simplicity because people now, who judge him by his drawings, would so much rather insist upon his perversity and his affectation. How can you reconcile that sort of thing with simplicity? They will ask, pointing to drawings of little mocking satyrs and twisted dwarfs and grotesques and extravagant forms and leering faces and a suggestion of one can hardly say what. But it might as well be asked why the mediæval artist delighted to carve homely, familiar scenes and incidents, and worse,

## NIGHTS: IN LONDON

in the holiest places, to lavish his ingenuity upon the demons and devils above the doors leading into his great churches; why a philosopher like Rabelais chose to express the wisest thought in the most indecent fooling; why every genius does not look out upon life and the world with the same eyes and find the same method to record what he sees. Some men can only marvel with Louis Stevenson at the wide contrast between the "prim obliterated polite face of life" and its "orgiastic foundations"; others are only reconciled to it by the humour in the contrast or by the pity invoked by its victims. What makes the genius is just the fact that he looks out upon life, that he feels, that he uses his eyes, in his own way; also, that he invents his own methods of expression. Beardsley saw the satire of life, he loved the grotesque which has so gone out of date in our matter-of-fact day that we almost forget what it means, and no doubt disease gave a morbid twist to his vision and imagination. But, above all, he was young, splendidly young: young when he began work, young when he finished work. He had the curiosity as to the world and everything in it that is the divine right of youth, and he had the gaiety, the exuberance, the flamboyancy, the fun of the youth destined to do and

to triumph. Already, in his later work, are signs of the passing of the first youthful stage of his art. It is suggestive to contrast the conventional landscapes with the grinning little monstrosities in some of the illustrations for the *Rape of the Lock*; the few drawings for his *Volpone* have a dignity he had not hitherto achieved.

Nobody can be surprised if some of the gaiety and exuberance and fun got no less into his manner towards the people whose habit is to shield their eyes with the spectacles of convention. Beardsley had a keen sense of humour that helped him to snatch all the joy there is in the old, time-honoured, youthful game of getting on the nerves of established respectability. Naturally, so Robert Ross, his friend, has said of him, "he possessed what is *called* an artificial manner"; that is, his manner was called affected, as was his art, because it wasn't exactly like everybody else's. I have never yet come across the genius whose manner was exactly like everybody else's, and shyness, self-consciousness, counted for something in his, at least at the start. He had only to exaggerate this manner, or mannerism, to set London talking. It was the easier because rumours quickly began to go about of the darkened room in which he worked, of his turning night

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into day and day into night like Huysmans's hero, and of this or of that strange habit or taste, until people began to see all sorts of things in him that weren't there, just as they read all sorts of things into his drawings that he never put into them, always seeking what they were determined to find. To many there was uncanniness in the very extent of his knowledge, in his wide reading, in his mastery of more than one art, for, if he had not been an artist, he most assuredly would have been a musician or a writer. Added to all this, was the abnormal notice he attracted almost at once, the diligence with which he was imitated and parodied and the rapidity with which a Beardsley type leaped into fashion.

Of course Beardsley enjoyed it. What youth of his age would not have enjoyed the excitement of such a success? It would have been morbid at his age not to enjoy it. He never seemed to me more simply himself than when he was relating his adventures and laughing at them with all the fresh, gay laughter of the boy—the wonderful boy—he was. Arthur Symons wrote of him, I have forgotten where, that he admired himself enormously. I should say that he was amused by himself enormously and was quite ready to pose and to bewilder for the sake of the amuse-

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ment it brought him. He was never spoiled nor misled by either his fame or his notoriety.

It was so Beardsley's habit to consult J. that he would have asked advice, if Harland had not, for *The Yellow Book* which went through several stages of its preliminary planning in the old Buckingham Street chambers. Among the vivid memories of our Thursday nights one is of Harland taking J. apart for long, intimate discussions in a corner of the studio, and another of Beardsley taking him off for confidences as intimate and long, and my impression in looking back, though I may be mistaken, is that each had his personal little scheme for a journal of his own before he decided to share it with the other. It was characteristic of the friendliness of both that they should have insisted upon J. figuring in the first number. As vivid in my memory is the warm spring morning when Beardsley, his face beaming with joy, called to give me an early copy of this first number, with a little inscription from him on the fly-leaf—I have just taken down the volume from the near book shelf—"To Mrs. Pennell from Aubrey Beardsley" I read, as commonplace an inscription as ever artist or author wrote, but, reading it, I see as if it were yesterday the sunlit Buckingham Street room where I used



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to work, William Penn curled up on my desk, and, coming in the door, the radiant youth with the gay-covered book in his hands.

And there followed the dinner—the amazing dinner as unlike the usual formal dinner of inauguration as could be. It was given in an upper room of the Hotel d'Italie in Old Compton Street and was as free of ceremony as our Thursday nights. The men were in dress suits or tweeds as they chose, the women in evening or tailor gowns according to their convenience. I have an impression that more people came than were expected and that it was all the waiters could do to serve them. I know I was much more concerned with my discomfort to find that Harland and Beardsley, for the first time in my experience, had forgotten how to talk. Everybody else was talking. I can still see the animated faces and hear the animated voices of Mrs. Harland and John Oliver Hobbes and Ménie Muriel Dowie and Kenneth Grahame and George Moore and John Lane and Max Beerbohm, and all the brand-new writers prepared to shock, or to “uplift,” or to pull down old altars and set up new ones, or any other of the fine things that were to make the *Yellow Book* a force and famous. But also I can still feel the heavy, unnatural silence of the two



editors from which I was the chief sufferer, to me having fallen the honour of sitting in the centre of the high table between them. J. was away and, in his absence, I was distinguished by this mark of Beardsley's appreciation and Harland's friendliness. I was greatly flattered, but less entertained. They were both as nervous as débutantes at a first party. Shrinking from the shadow cast before by their coming speeches, neither of them had as much as a word to throw me. Nor could they concentrate their distracted thoughts upon the *menu*—plate after plate was taken away untouched, while I kept on emptying mine in self-defence, to pass the time, wondering if, in my rôle of the *Pall Mall's* "greedy Autolycus," my friends would now convict me of the sin of public eating as well as what they had been pleased to pretend was my habit of "private eating," for not otherwise, they would assure me, could they account for the unfailing flamboyancy of my weekly article on cookery. Seated between the two men, in their hours of ease when they were not editors, my trouble would have been to listen to both at the same moment and to get a word in edgewise. However, when the speeches were over the strain was relaxed. The evening ended in the accustomed floods of talk;—on the

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way from the Hotel d'Italie; at the Bodley Head, John Lane's new premises in the Albany to which he took us all that we might see the place from which the *Yellow Book* was to be published; round a little table with a red-and-white checked cover in the basement of the Monico, the company now reduced to Harland and Mrs. Harland, Beardsley, Max Beerbohm and two or three others whose faces have grown dim in my memory, everybody as unwilling to break up the meeting as on Thursday nights in our Buckingham Street rooms. And with these ceremonies the *Yellow Book* was launched into life.

I am not sure what the *Yellow Book* means to others—to those others who buy it now in the thirteen volumes of the new edition and prize it as a strange record of a strange period, from which they feel as far removed as we felt from the Sixties. But to me, the bright yellow-bound volumes mean youth, gay, irresponsible, credulous, hopeful youth, and Thursday night at Buckingham Street in full swing. To be sure the *Yellow Book* was never so young as it was planned to be. It did not represent only *les Jeunes*, who would have kept it all to themselves in their first mad, exuberant, reckless spring-time. But they were not strong enough to stand

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alone, as *les Jeunes* seldom are, or have been through the ages. It was more original in its art than in its literature. Some of the youngest writers were "discoveries" of Henley's, while some who actually were "discovered" by the *Yellow Book* have faded out of sight. Many were men of name and fame well established. Hamerton, almost at the end of his career, Henry James in the full splendour of his maturity, Edmund Gosse with his reputation already assured, were as welcome as the youngest of the young men and women who had never printed a line before. So identified with "this passage of literary history"—in his words—was Henry James that he has recorded the preliminary visit of "a young friend [Harland of course], a Kensington neighbour and an ardent man of letters," with "a young friend of his own," in whom there is no mistaking Beardsley, "to bespeak my interest for a periodical about to take birth in his hands, on the most original 'lines' and with the happiest omen." But there was youth in this readiness for hero-worship—youth in this tribute to the older men whose years could not dim the brilliance nor lessen the power of their work in the eyes of the new generation—the fragrance of youth exudes from the pages of the *Yellow Book*

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as I turn them over again, in places the fragrance of infancy, the young contributors so young as to seem scarcely out of their swaddling clothes. At the time the energy and zest put into it had an equal savour of youth. And altogether it gave us all a great deal to talk about, so that I see in it now a sort of link to join on Thursday nights the different groups from their opposing corners, supplying to writers and artists one subject of the same interest to both. It even opened the door to the architects, one of whom went so far as to neglect architecture and to emulate Ibsen in a play.

The last thing I foresaw for the *Yellow Book* was a speedy end or, for the matter of that, any end at all, so overflowing was it with the spirit of youth and energy, war and enthusiasm. But the end came surprisingly soon. To remind me, were I in danger of forgetting, another book stands on our shelves close to the First Volume of the *Yellow Book*:—the First Volume of the *Savoy*, on its fly-leaf again Beardsley's inscription simple as himself, "Mrs. Pennell, with kindest regards from Aubrey Beardsley," and only a little less than two years between the dates of the two. And the beginning of the *Savoy* meant the end of the *Yellow Book*, whose life was short

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after Beardsley left it. Why he left it has nothing to do with the story of our Thursday nights, when no obstacle, great or small, would have been put in its way by us who held youth and energy, war and enthusiasm above most things in demand and honour. But I question if the time has come for the full telling of the story, wherever or with whom the blame may lie. That an objection was raised to Beardsley's presence in the *Yellow Book*, though without Beardsley there would have been no *Yellow Book*, is known and has been told in print, the reason being that Victorian sham prudery and respectability had not been totally wiped out for all the hard fighting of the Fighting Nineties. Beardsley was not slain, he was not defeated, at once he reappeared on the battle-field with the *Savoy*, Arthur Symonds his fellow editor. But by now the enemy never yet conquered on this earth held him in deadly grip, and the fight he had to fight sent him from London to Bournemouth, to Saint-Germain, to Dieppe, to Mentone in search of health. He was the youngest of that old Thursday night crowd and he was the first to go, and the *Savoy* went with him, and before he had gone our Thursday nights were already but a landmark in memory, so quickly does the flame of youth burn out.



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### VII

By another of our happy chances Phil May came as assiduously on our Thursday nights as Beardsley, and they were two of the artists, though their art was as the poles apart, who had most influence on the black-and-white of the Nineties—it will be seen from this that I refrain from saying what I think of J. and his influence, but it is considered almost as indiscreet, almost as bad form, to admit the excellence or importance of one's husband's work as to pretend to any in one's own.

If no drawings could have been less like Beardsley's than Phil May's neither could two men have been more utterly unlike. Some friends of Beardsley's believe that he was happiest where there was most noise, most people, most show, which, however, was not my impression. But when there was the noise of people about him, he might be relied upon to contribute his share and to take part in whatever show was going. I question if Phil May was happy at all unless in the midst of many people and much noise, whether at home or abroad, but to their noise, anyway, he had not the least desire to add. Beardsley was fond of talk, always had something to say, was always eager to say it. All Phil May



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asked was not to be expected to say anything, to be allowed to smile amiably his dissent or approval. Had the rest of our company been of his mind in the matter, it would not have been so much easier for us to start the talk at once than to stop it at a reasonable hour, our Thursday nights would not have been so deafening with talk that I do not yet understand why the other tenants in the house did not unite in an indignant protest to the landlord.

It was not laziness that kept him silent. He had not a touch of laziness in his composition. His drawings look so simple that people thought they were dashed off at odd moments. But over them he took the infinite pains and time considered by the wise to be the true secret of genius. It may be he expressed himself so well in lines he had no use for words. The one indisputable fact is that he would do anything to escape talking. I recall a night—not a Thursday night though he finished it in our rooms—when he had been invited to lecture to a Woman's Club at the Society of Arts. He appeared on the platform with a formidable-looking MS. in his hand, but he put it down at once and spent his appointed hour in making drawings on big sheets of paper arranged for an occasional illustration. He had



Drawing by Himself

PHIL MAY IN CAP AND BELLS



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more to say than I ever heard him say anywhere, when we got back to Buckingham Street. The MS. was all right, he assured us, a capital lecture written for him by a friend, but it began "Far be it from me" something or other, he didn't wait to see what, for, as far as he got, it did not sound like him, did it? and we could honestly agree that it did not.

He could talk. I must not give the idea that he could not. I know some of his friends who do not share or accept unqualified my memory of him as a silent man. But he talked most and best when he had but a single companion, and nothing could persuade me that he was not always relieved, when the chance came, to let others do the talking for him.

I do not know what the attraction was that made everybody like him, not merely the riffraff and the loafers who hung about his studio and waylaid him in the street for what they could get out of him, but all sorts of people who asked for nothing save his company—I could never define the attraction to myself. It was not his looks. Even before his last years, when he was the image of J. J. Shannon's portrait of him, his appearance was not prepossessing. He dressed well according to his ideals. Beardsley was not more of

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a dandy; but Beardsley was the dandy of Piccadilly or the Boulevards, Phil May was the dandy of the race-course. He brought with him that inevitable, indescribable look that the companionship of horses gives and that in those days broke out largely in short, wide-spreading covert coats and big pearl buttons. I have always been grateful to the man who enlivens the monotony of dress by a special fashion of his own, provided it belongs to him. The horsy costume did belong to May, for he rode and hunted and was a good deal with horses, but it was borrowed by some of his admirers until it degenerated into almost as great an affectation as the artist's velvet jacket and long hair, or the high stock and baggy corduroys of the Latin Quarter imported into Chelsea. When the Beggarstaff Brothers, as Pryde and Nicholson called themselves in those old days, would wander casually into our rooms at the end of six or eight feet of poster that they had brought to show J. and that needed a great deal of manipulation to bring in at all, they looked as if the stable, not the studio, was their workshop. And one young genius of an illustrator, who could not afford to ride, and who I do not believe had ever been on a horse in his life, could not mount the bus in his near suburb

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without putting on riding breeches. But Phil May's dress was as essentially his as his silence.

Neither his looks nor his silence, however original and personal, could have been the cause of the charm he undeniably possessed. I think he was one of the people whom one feels are nice instinctively, without any reason. He was sympathetic and responsive, serious when the occasion called for it, foolish when folly was in order. It wasn't only in his drawings that he was ready to wear the cap and bells. I know an artist, one of whose cherished memories of Phil May is of the Christmas Eve when they both rang Lord Leighton's door-bell and ran away and back to Phil May's studio on the other side of the road, and Phil May was as pleased as if it had been a masterpiece for *Punch*. He was naturally kind,—amiable perhaps because it was the simplest thing to be. In his own house his amiability forced him to break his silence, but his remarks then, as far as I heard them, were usually confined to the monotonous offer "Have a cigar!" "Have a whiskey-and-soda!" or "Have a drawing!" if anyone happened to express admiration for his work. Had we accepted this last offer every time it was made to us, we would have a fine collection of Phil May's, while,



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as it is, we do not own as much as a single sketch given to us by him. Visitors who did not share our scruples have found their steady attendance at his Sunday nights one of the best investments they ever made.

Away from his own house, on our Thursday nights, relieved of the necessity to offer anything, this being now our business, his conversation was more limited than in his own place. My memory of him is of an ugly, delightful, smiling, silent man, sitting astride a chair, his arms resting on the back, a big cigar in his mouth, and around him a band of devoted admirers as fully prepared and equipped to do the talking for him as he was to let them do it. He held his court as royally among illustrators as Henley among his Young Men, and if nobody contributed so little to the talk as Phil May, around nobody else, except Henley, did so much of the talk centre.

In my recollections of Phil May astride his chair on Thursday nights, Hartrick and Sullivan are never very long absent. Nobody knew better than they the beauty of his work—to hear them talk about his line was to be convinced that the supreme interest in life was the expressive quality of a line made with pen in black ink on a piece of white paper. The appearance of *The*

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*Parson and the Painter* was one of the events of the Nineties—though it was not boomed into notoriety as were the performances of some other illustrators of the period as ingenious as Barnum in the art of advertisement—and there was not an artist who did not hail May as a master. But Hartrick and Sullivan went further. They were not only such good artists themselves that they could appreciate genius in others, they were young enough not to be afraid of their enthusiasms. They gave the effect of being with May, with whom they often arrived and stayed until the deplorably early hour of the morning at which he started for home, in order that they might watch over him, and, indeed, he needed watching. He was not readier in offering than in giving anything he was asked for, which was one reason why there was always a procession of waiters and actors and jockeys out of work at his front door—why his pockets were always empty. They even discovered the same genius in May's talk as in his drawing, though the mystery was when they heard the talk. To this day they will quote Phil May while I wonder how it is that while for me Henley's talk has not lost its thunder, nor Bob Stevenson's its brilliant flashes of imbecility, nor Harland's its whimsical twist, nor Beardsley's

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its fresh gaiety, nothing of Phil May's remains save the familiar refrain "Have a cigar!" "Have a whiskey-and-soda!" "Have a drawing!"

Obsessed by my old-fashioned notion as hostess that people could not enjoy themselves unless they were kept moving, persisting in my vain efforts to break up the groups into which the company invariably fell, again and again I would lure Hartrick and Sullivan away from Phil May. But it was no use. What they all wanted was to talk not only about their shop but their own particular counter in it, and no sooner was my back turned than there they were in the same groups again, Hartrick and Sullivan watching over Phil May, supported by Raven Hill and Edgar Wilson, both then deeply involved in youth's game of shocking the *bourgeois* by showing on the pages of *Pick-Me-Up* how the matter of illustration was ordered in France, and presently starting a magazine of their own to show it the better, and to do their share as ardent rebels in the big fight of the Nineties. On my shelves, close by the first number of *The Yellow Book* and of the *Savoy* is the first volume of *The Butterfly* and on its fly-leaf is the inscription: "To Elizabeth Robins Pennell with L. Raven Hill's kind regards," no more startlingly original than Beards-

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ley's inscriptions, but to me full of meaning and memories. I cannot look at it without seeing myself fluttering from one to another of the old Buckingham Street rooms, heavy with the smell of smoke and powder, thunderous not only with the knocking—naturally I quote the Ibsen phrase everybody was quoting in the Nineties—but the banging, the battering, the bombarding of the younger generation at the Victorian door against which it was desperate work to make any impression at all.

### VIII

In my less responsible intervals it amused me to find the painters running their own shop, or their own little counter, quite apart from the illustrators, and carrying on all by themselves their own special campaign against that obdurate Victorian door. Their campaign, as they ran it, required less talk than most, for they were chiefly men of the New English Art Club—the men who gave the shows where Felix Buhot smelt the powder—the men who were considered apostles of defiance when the inner group held their once-famous exhibition as “London Impressionists”—the men about whom the critics for a while did nothing save talk—but men who had the reputation of talking so little themselves

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that, when a man came up for election in their Club, his talent for silence was said to be as important a consideration with them as his talent for art. Not that the silence of any one of them could rival Phil May's in eloquence—they never learned to say nothing with his charm. Often the poverty of their conversation had the effect of being involuntary, as if they might have had plenty to say had they known how to say it. More than one struggled to rid himself of his talent with at least an air of success.

The big booming voice of Charles W. Furse was frequently heard, but in it a suspicion of an Academic note unfamiliar in our midst, so that, young as he was, combative, enthusiastic, “a good fellow” as they say in England, still in his Whistler and rebel period, his friends predicted for him the Presidency of the Royal Academy. The first time I ever saw him was the year he was showing at the New English two large upright, full-length portraits of women, highly reminiscent of Whistler, and, on press day, was being turned out of the gallery by the critics who, in revolutionizing criticism, were fighting against the old-fashioned Victorian idea of press views with the artists busy log-rolling and an elaborate lunch, or at least whiskey and cigars behind a



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screen. The New English men compromised by staying away, but they clung to the lunch, a feast chiefly for their commissionaire and their salesman and the grey-haired critic, a survival, who could not reconcile himself to change and whom I heard once, in another gallery, pronounce the show admirable, "perfect really, your show, but for one thing missing—a decanter and cigars on the table." Furse, who had not heard the critic's cry for reform and could not understand his banishment, lingered in the passage, button-holing everybody who came out, trying to pick up a hint as to what we were all going to say about him. He considered himself a red-hot rebel and the prophetic picture of him scaling Academic heights annoyed him extremely, though he so soon became an Associate of the Academy that I think, had he lived, time would have proved the prophets right.

Walter Sickert's voice, too, was frequently heard at the beginning of a Thursday night, but his promise of brilliancy never struck me as leading anywhere in particular, my personal impression being that with his talk, as with his art, the fulfilment scarcely justified the promise.

D. S. MacColl, young arch-rebel at the time little as the formal official of to-day suggests it,



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his bombarding of the Victorian door directed chiefly from the sober columns of the *Spectator*, and later of the *Saturday Review*, was always well armed with words for the Thursday night battle, conscientious in distributing his blows and shaping them in strict deference to his sense of style, just a touch of the preacher perhaps in his voice and in his fight for art and freedom, as he was the first to acknowledge; more than once I have heard him explain apologetically that his right place was the pulpit for which he had been designed.

Arthur Tomson, one of the best friends in the world, was a spirited revolutionary who went to the length of founding and editing a paper of his own to promote revolution—the *Art Weekly*, which, not being able to afford illustrations, conducted its warfare solely by its articles, and strong, fearless, knock-you-down articles they were since we all wrote for the paper while it lasted. It did not last long, however, but shared the fate of most revolutionary sheets with more brains than capital. Arthur Tomson himself, out of print, was a quiet, if staunch fighter, another of the old Thursday night group who knew that his years on this earth were to be short. He was not the gayer for it as Harland and Beardsley

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were, but the sadder, it may be because he foresaw the end long before it came, and he was given to the melancholy that found expression in so many of his paintings.

Wilson Steer, Tonks, Professor Brown passed, and no more, across the stage of our Thursday nights, all three, as I remember them, scrupulous in upholding the reputation for silence of their Club. Conder flitted in and out of our rooms, always agreeable but not the man to lift up his voice in a crowd.

Occasionally, a visitor from abroad appeared—Felix Buhot every Thursday that one winter, or, more rarely Paul Renouard, in London for the *Graphic*, his appearance an event for the illustrators who already revered him as a veteran. Or else it was a representative, a publisher, of *les Jeunes* over there, bringing fresh stimulus, fresh incentive, especially if his coming meant fresh orders and fresh opportunity to say what had to be said freely and without restraint. Once it was Jules Roque from Paris, of the *Courrier Français* in which he published the drawings of Louis Legrand and Forain and other artists accepted as models by the young men of our Thursday nights who believed in themselves the more defiantly when asked to figure in such good

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company. Once it was Meier Graefe from Berlin, big, handsome, enterprising, not yet encumbered with Post-Impressionism and its outshoots, seeking American and British contributors to the German *Pan*, a magazine as big and enterprising as himself if not always as handsome, and the younger generation of London had the comfort of knowing that if the Victorian door in England held firm, the door of Europe had opened to them.

Occasionally one of the older, the very much older generation came in to make us feel the younger for his presence—none more imposing than Sandys, most distinguished in his old age, wearing the white waistcoat that was the life-long symbol of his dandyism, full of Pre-Raphaelite reminiscences, and reminiscences of the Italian Primitives could not have seemed more remote. J. sometimes met Holman Hunt in other haunts—at dinners of the Society of Illustrators and elsewhere—and reported him to me as a talker who could, in the quantity and aggressiveness of his talk, have given points to Henley and Henley's Young Men, so I regret that he never was with us to talk over Pre-Raphaelite days with Sandys. The only other possible representative of Pre-Raphaelitism who came was Walter Crane, if so he can be called, for the tra-

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dition fell lightly on his shoulders, was a mere re-echo in his work; the only one of Sandys's contemporaries was Whistler, and their meeting of which J. and I have written in another place, does not belong to the story of our Thursday nights, for they were a thing of the past when Whistler returned from Paris, where he had gone to live almost as they began.

Nor did Sandys often appear on Thursdays. He seemed to prefer the evenings when we were alone, to my surprise, for the homage he received when he did come on Thursday must have been pleasant. Drawings of his hung prominently in our rooms, J. then haunting the salesrooms for the originals of the Sixties as industriously as the barrows and shops for their reproductions. And to the man who prefers fame to reach him during his lifetime, surely it should have been an agreeable experience to sit, or to be enthroned as it were, in so friendly an atmosphere, with some of his own finest work on the wall behind him for background, and surrounded by a worshipping group asking nothing better than to be allowed to sit at his feet and listen to his every word—which was a sacrifice for his worshippers in Buckingham Street who rejoiced in the sound of their own voices as did most of the company.

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But the Nineties are not more wonderful and stimulating to the young men of to-day who look back to them so admiringly, than the Sixties were to us whom they kept up into the small hours of many a Friday morning, inexhaustible as a subject of our talk, and Sandys, standing for the Sixties and all we found in them so admirable, could command any sacrifice. The respect for the Sixties was an article of faith, a dogma of dogmas in the Nineties. If the now younger generation write articles and books about the Nineties—those amazing documents in which I scarcely recognise an age I thought I knew by heart—we were still more zealous in writing books about the Sixties. And we collected the drawings and publications of the Sixties. When J. and I now allowed ourselves an afternoon out, it was to wander from Holywell Street to Mile End Road, from Piccadilly to Holborn, searching the booksellers' barrows and shops for the unsightly, gaudy, badly-bound volumes that contained the illustrations of the Sixties—illustrations ranked amongst the finest ever made. Our book-shelves that are still filled with them represent one of the most animated phases of the Nineties. And we looked upon the "men of the



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Sixties" as masters, among them giving to Sandys a leading place.

If he was not any longer doing the work for which we took off our hat to him, he certainly looked the leader—tall, handsome, dignified, just enough of a stoop in his shoulders to become his age, his dress irreproachable, the white waistcoat immaculate, pale yellow hair parted in the middle and beautifully brushed, beard not patriarchal exactly but eminently correct and well cared for, manners princely. It was clear that he liked the rôle of master and his voice was in keeping with the part. But he was a master who presided at his best over a small audience, and, no doubt knowing it, he avoided our Thursdays.

He was also a master given to small gossip. We heard from him less of art, its aims and ideals, its mediums and methods, than of the sayings and doings of the Pre-Raphaelites who were his friends and contemporaries. The name of "Gabriel" was ever in his mouth. It was Rossetti whom he most loved—or love is not the word, less of affection revealed in his memories than a sense of injury, as if it had somehow been the fault of "Gabriel" and the others that he had not come off as well as they, though of all "Ga-



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briel'' had been most active in seeing him through the tight places he so successfully got himself into. This, no doubt, was the reason Rossetti felt entitled to a little laugh now and then over Sandys's difficulties. Sandys was a man who needed to be seen through tight places until the end, as we had occasion to know by the urgent note he sent us on a Saturday night, more than once, from the *Café Royal*, his favourite haunt in his later years, where a variety of unavoidable accidents, with a curious faculty for repeating themselves, would keep him prisoner until his friends came to his relief.

He was full of anecdote, which was quite in the order of things, the Sixties having supplied anecdote for a whole library of books and magazines. Could I tell Sandys's stories with Sandys's voice I should be tempted to repeat them yet once again, though many were told us also by Whistler, and these J. and I have recorded in the *Life*. Whistler told them better, with more truth because with more gaiety and joy in their absurdity. And yet, the solemnity of Sandys added a personal flavour, gave them a character nobody else could give. I have not forgotten how he turned into a parable the tale of the cross-eyed maid in the Morris Shop in Red Lion Square, whose eyes

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were knocked straight by a shock the company of Morris, Marshall, and Faulkner administered deliberately, and then were knocked crooked again by a shock they had not provided for or against. And, as Sandys recalled them, the strange beasts in "Gabriel's" house and garden might have been let loose from out of the Apocalypse. But Sandys's voice has been stilled forever and the anecdotes have been published oftener, I do believe, than any others in the world's rich store of *clichés*. The great of his day had all the Boswells they wanted—a retinue of admirers and cuffs ready—at their head William Michael Rossetti to pour out book after book about his brother, to leave little untold about the group that revolved round "Gabriel." Even the third generation, with Ford Madox Hueffer to lead, has taken up the task. The anecdotes have grown familiar, but it is something to have heard them from the men who were their heroes.

### IX

Well—our Thursdays were pleasant, an inspiration while they lasted, and for a time I thought they must last as long as we did. But nothing pleasant endures forever, the bravest inspiration flickers and dies almost before we

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realize its flaring. The stern duty of Friday morning always haunted me in anticipation, for I have never been able to take lightly the work I do with so much difficulty, and Friday morning itself often brought even J. up with a sharp turn to face the fact that man was born into the world to labour in the sweat of his brow, and not simply to talk all night until no work was left in him.

That may have been one reason for our giving up so agreeable a custom. Another perhaps came from the discovery that the freedom of our Thursday nights was sometimes abused. A certain type of Englishman would travel a mile and more for anything he did not have to pay for, even if it was for nothing more substantial than a cigarette, a sandwich, a whiskey-and-soda. There were evenings when, looking round the packed dining-room, it would occur to me that I did not recognise half the people in it. Friends introduced friends and they introduced other friends until, in bewilderment, I asked myself if our Thursday night was ours or somebody else's. And I fancied a tendency to treat it as if it were somebody else's,—to take an ell when we meant to give no more than an inch, and J. was as little inclined as I to furnish a new proof of the wise old proverb. One day a would-be wit who was

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regular in his attendance and his talk, and who should have known better, asked J., "Are you still running your Thursday Club?" and so helped to precipitate the end. We were not running a Club for anybody, and if the fame of our Thursday night filled our rooms with people who behaved as if we were, the sooner we got rid of them the better.

Besides, as the weeks and the months and the years went on, many who had come and talked and fought our Thursday night through ceased to come altogether. Where I failed in breaking up the groups Time, with its cruel thoroughness, succeeded and began to scatter them far and wide. Death stilled voices that had been loudest. The *National Observer* passed out of Henley's hands and Henley himself into the Valley of the Shadow. Bob Stevenson said his last good-night to us. Beardsley, Harland, Arthur Tomson, George Steevens, Phil May, Furse, Iwan-Müller—one after another of our old friends, one after another of those old masters of talk set out on the journey into the Great Silence. It is hard to believe they have gone. I remember how, when they were with us and the talk was at its maddest and somebody would suddenly take breath long enough to look out of our windows, whose

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curtains were never drawn upon the one spectacle we could offer—the river with the boats trailing their lights down its shadowy reaches, and the Embankment with the lights of the hansom flying to and fro, and the bridges with the procession of lights from the omnibuses and cabs and the trails of burning cloud from the trains—Henley would say, “How it lives, how it throbs with life out there!” and I would think to myself, “And how it lives, how it throbs with life in here!”—with a life too intense, it seemed, ever to wear itself out. And yet now only two or three of the old friends of the old Thursday nights are left to look down with us upon the river where it flows below our windows—upon the moving lights of London’s great traffic, upon London’s great life and great beauty, and great movement without end.

It is not only the dead we have lost. Time has made other changes as sad as any wrought by Death. The young have grown old,—have thrown off youth’s “proud livery” for the sombre garment of age. The years have turned the rebel of yesterday into the Royal Academician of to-day. The inspired young prophet who protested week by week against mediocrity in paint, settled down to keeping the mediocre paintings against



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which his protests were loudest. He who thundered against the degeneracy of journalism accepted the patronage of the titled promoter of the half-penny press. Architects carried their respectability to the professional chair it adorns, and illustrators rested in the comfortable berths provided by *Punch*. Friendships cooled, and friends who never missed a Thursday look the other way when they meet us in the street.

Close to me, as I write, is a bookcase on whose shelves Henley and Henley's Young Men—Marriott Watson, George Steevens, Charles Whibley, Leonard Whibley, Rudyard Kipling, Kenneth Grahame, Arthur Morrison, G. S. Street—jostle each other in the big and little volumes that were to create the world anew. The small green-bound Henleys stand in a row. *Salome*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *Volpone*, with Beardsley's illustrations, are flanked by the more pretentious performances of the Kelmscott Press and the Vale Press and the other Presses aspiring with much advertisement to do what the Constables of Edinburgh did so much better as a matter of course, and, as a reminder of this truth, the *Montaigne* of the *Tudor Series* is there and the *Apuleius* and the *Heliodorus*, each with its inscription. And the little slim volume, neatly



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bound by Zaehnsdorf, called *Allahakbarries*—now a prize for the collector I am told—immortalizes one recreation at least of Henley's Young Men. For it is Barrie's report of the Cricket Team largely made up of these Young Men, of whom he was Captain and who used to play at Shere on the never-to-be-forgotten summer days when beautiful Graham Tomson and I were graciously invited as Patronesses, and little Madge Henley—her death shortly afterwards proving Henley's own death blow—figured as "Captain's Girl" and the *National Observer* office as "Practice Ground." And if Henley did not drag himself down with us to the pretty Surrey village, he seemed to preside over us all, so much so that when J. and I had the little book bound and added the photographs Harold Frederic—"Photographer" in the report—made of the Team, we included one of Henley, and altogether the tiny volume is as eloquent a document of the Nineties and of Henley and Henley's Young Men as we have, and I wonder what the collector of those snares for the American now catalogued by the bookseller as "Association Books" would not give to own it. And close by our *Allahakbarries*, Henry Harland's *Mademoiselle Miss* meets in the old friendly companionship Stee-

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vens's *Land of the Dollar* and Graham Tomson's *Poems* and Bob Stevenson's *Velasquez* and Harold Frederic's *Return of the O'Mahoney* and Bernard Shaw's *Cashel Byron's Profession* in its rare paper cover, and George Moore's *Strike at Arlingford*, and Marriott Watson's *Diogenes of London*, and—but of what use to go through the list, the long catalogue, to the end? Ghosts greet me from those shelves, ghosts from the old Thursdays, from the radiant days when youth was merging into middle age—surely the best period in one's existence—days into which the breath of life never can be breathed again. We could not revive the old nights if we would. I suppose nobody now reads Zola, but we read him in the Nineties and I have always been haunted by his description in *L'Oeuvre* of the last reunion of the friends who, in their eager youth, had meant to conquer Paris and who used to meet to plan their campaign over a dinner as meagre as their income and gay as their hopes. But when, after years during which money and fame had been heaped up by more than one and disappointment and despair lavished in equal measure upon others, they ventured to dine together again, and the dinner was good and well served as it never had been of old, it turned to dust and ashes in

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their mouths—a funeral feast. Dust and ashes would be our fare were we so foolish as again to open our doors on the Thursday night consecrated to youth and its battles long ago.

### X

If we have had no more Thursday nights, it does not follow that we have had no other nights. The habit of years is not so easily broken, and our habit was, and is, at night to gather people about us and to talk. Only, after the Nineties, or rather before the end of the Nineties, we never settled again with weekly regularity upon one special night out of the seven for the purpose—on the contrary, we took, and we now take, our nights as they came and come.

They have not been, for that, the less interesting and amusing, not less loud with the sound of battle, not less fragrant with the smell of smoke. It was just after our Thursday nights, for instance, that we began what I might call our Whistler nights, and a more stimulating talker than Whistler never talked, a more stimulating fighter never fought. I do not mean in the impossible way meant by those whose judgment of him rests solely on *The Gentle Art*. They think he fought for no other end than to make enemies

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when, really, he enjoyed far more the good give-and-take argument that preserved to him his friends, provided those friends fought fair and did not play the coward, or the toady, to escape the combat.

J. and I have written his Life in vain if everybody who cares to know anything about him does not know that from 1895 and 1896, the greater part of his time was spent in London and that many of his nights were then given to us, more particularly towards the end of the amazing decade. We paid for the privilege by the loss of some of our friends who, for one reason or another, cultivated a wholesome fear of Whistler. Men who had been most constant in dropping in, dropped in no longer—nor, in many cases, have they ever begun to drop in again. More than one would have run miles to escape the chance encounter, trembling with apprehension when in a desperate visit they seemed to court it, and often the several doors opening into our little hall served as important a part in preventing a meeting between Whistler and the enemy as the doors in the old-fashioned farce played in the husband and wife game of hide-and-seek.

It was not too big a price to pay. Whistler's

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talk was worth a great deal, and the twelve years that have passed since we lost it forever have not lessened its value for us. Ours is a sadder world since we have ceased to hear the memorable and unmistakable knock and ring at our front door, the prelude to the talk, rousing the whole house until every tenant in the other chambers and the housekeeper in her rooms below knew when Whistler came to see us. Our nights, since those he animated and made as "joyous" as he liked to be in his hours of play and battle, have lost their savour. We are perpetually referring to them, quoting, regretting them. Even Augustine looks back to them as making a pleasant epoch in her life. Often she will remind me of this night or that, declaring we have grown dull without him—but do I remember the night when M. Whistlaire argued so hard and with such violence that the print of the rabbit fell from the wall in its frame, the glass shivering in a thousand pieces, just when M. Kennedy was so angry we thought he was going to walk away forever, and how after that there could be no more arguing, and M. Whistlaire laughed as she swept up the pieces, and M. Kennedy did not walk away alone, but later they both walked away together, arm-in-arm, to



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the hotel where they always stayed?—and do I remember how, during the Boer War, he would come and dine with me alone, his pockets stuffed with newspaper clippings, and how he would put them by his plate, and how long we would sit at table because he would read every one of them to me, with that gay laugh nobody laughs nowadays?—and do I remember that other evening when he and Monsieur disputed and disputed she didn't know about what, and how excited they got, and how he kept banging the table with his knife, the sharp edge down, until he cut a long slit in the cloth, and it was our best table-cloth too?—and do I remember the long stories he would tell us some evenings and his little mocking laugh when she, who could not understand a word, knew he was saying something malicious about somebody?—and do I remember how he liked a good dinner and her cooking because it was French, and how he would never refuse when she promised him her *pot-au-feu* or one of her salads—and do I remember one after another of those old nights the like of which we shall never see again? Do I remember indeed? They fill too big a space in memory, they overshadow too well the lesser nights with lesser men, they were too joyous an episode in our thirty long years of talk for me



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ever to forget them. The three classical knocks of the *Théâtre Français* could not announce more certainly a night of beauty or wit or fun or romance than the violent ring and the resounding knock at the old battered door of the Buckingham Street chambers where, for Whistler, the oak was never sported.

But of our Whistler nights we have already made the record—this is another tale that is already told. I think Whistler knew their value as well as we did, knew what they cost us in the loss of friends, knew what he had given us in return, knew what he had revealed to us of himself in all friendliness, and that this was the reason he looked to us for the record not only of his nights with us, but of his life. Once he had confided that charge to us, the old Buckingham Street nights grew more marvellous still, full of reminiscences, of comment, of criticism, of friendliness, his talk none the less stimulating and splendid because, at his request, the cuff or note-book was always ready. And they continued until the long tragic weeks and months when he was first afraid to go out at night and then unable to, and when the talks were by day instead—not quite the same in the last, the saddest months of all, for weakness and thoughts of the work yet

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to be done and the feebleness that kept him from doing it fell like a black cloud over all our meetings, even those where the old gaiety asserted itself for a moment and the old light of battle gleamed again in his eyes. To the end he liked the talk no less than we, for to the end he sent for us, to the end he would see us when few besides were admitted. There, for those who would like to question his friendship with us, for those who believe that Whistler never could keep a friend because he never wanted to, is the proof dear to us of the good friend he could be when his friendship was not abused or taken advantage of behind his back.

Many other nights besides there have been—long series of American nights—John Van Dyke nights I might say, Timothy Cole nights,—but no, I am not going to name names and make a catalogue, I am not going to write their story, I am not going to run the risks of the folly I have protested against. I have confessed my safe belief that of the living only good should be spoken, and good only when it is within the bounds of discretion. It is not my ambition to rival at home the unpopularity of N. P. Willis in England after the first of his indiscretions, which

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seem discretion itself now in the light of to-day's yellow and society journalism.

And there have been English nights—many—nights with old friends who are faithful and new friends who are devoted—nights of late so like the old Thursday nights that both Hartrick and Sullivan, now twenty years older and with no Phil May to revolve round, asked why those old memorable gay nights could not be revived? But would they be gay? Would they not turn out the dust and ashes, the worse than Lenten fare, from which I shrink? Would they not, as I have said, prove as mournful as that banquet of Zola's Conquerors of Paris?

Recently there have been Belgian nights—nights with those Belgian artists whose habit was never to travel at all until they started on their journey as exiles to London—a journey to which the end in a return journey seems to them so tediously long in coming. And there have been War nights when the clash of our battle, in the grim consciousness of that other battle not so far away, is less cheerful. And there have been nights with the great search-lights over the Thames that tell us as much as those young insistent voices in Buckingham Street could tell, but only of things so tragic and so sombre that I

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am the more eager to finish the story of our London nights with our Thursdays, in the years when we were burdened by no more serious fighting than the endless fight of friend with friend, of fellow worker with fellow worker, fought in the good cause of work and play, faith and doubt, fear and hope—a stirring fight, but one in which words are the weapons, one which can never be won or lost, since no two can ever be found to agree when they talk for pleasure, nor any one man forced to agree with himself for all time.



V  
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## IN PARIS

### I

I STILL go to Paris every year in May when the *Salons* open, but now I go alone. The lilacs and horse-chestnuts, that J. used to reproach me for never keeping out of the articles it was my business to write there, still bloom in the *Champs-Élysées* and the *Bois*, but now I am no longer tempted to drag them into my MS. The spring nights still are beautiful on the *Boulevards* and *Quais* but only ghosts walk with me along the old familiar ways, only ghosts sit with me at table in restaurants where once I always ate in company. Paris has lost half its charm since the days when, as regularly as spring came round, I was one of the little group of critics and artists and friends from London who met in it for a week among the pictures.

It was much the same group, if smaller, that met on our Thursday nights in London. Some of us went for work, to “do” the *Salons* after we had “done” the Royal Academy and the New Gallery, then the Academy’s only London rival: Bob Stevenson for the *Pall Mall*, D. S. MacColl for the *Spectator*, Charles Whibley for the

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*National Observer*. J., during several years, spared the time from more important things to fight as critic the empty criticism of the moment, the old-fashioned criticism that recognised no masterpiece outside of Burlington House and saw nothing in a picture or a drawing save a story: a thankless task, for already the old-fashioned criticism threatens to become the new-fashioned again. I, for my part, was kept as busy as I knew how to be, and busier, for the *Nation* and my London papers. Others went because they were artists and wanted to see what Paris was doing and May was the season when Paris was doing most and was most liberal in letting everybody see it. Beardsley and Furse seldom failed, and I do not suppose a year passed that we did not chance upon one or more unexpected friends in a gallery or a *café* and add them to our party. Sometimes a Publisher was with us, his affairs an excuse for a holiday, or sometimes an Architect to show the poor foreigner how respectable British respectability can be and, incidentally, to make his a guarantee of ours that we could have dispensed with. Harland and Mrs. Harland were always there, I do believe for sheer love of Paris in the May-time, and I rather think theirs was the wisest reason of all.

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During no week throughout my hard-working year did I have to work harder than during that May week spent in Paris. I am inclined now, in the more leisurely period of life at which I have arrived, to admire myself when I recall how many articles I had to write, how many prints and drawings, statues and pictures, I had to look at in order to write them, and my success in never leaving my editors in the lurch. My admiration is the greater because nobody could know as well as I how slow I have always been with my work and also, to do myself justice, how conscientious, as I do not mind saying, though to be called conscientious by anybody else would seem to me only less offensive than to be called good-natured or amiable. As a critic I never could get to the point of writing round the pictures and saying nothing about them like many I knew for whom five minutes in a gallery sufficed, nor, to be frank, did I try to. Neither could I hang an article on one picture. I might envy George Moore, for an interval the critic of the *Speaker*, now the *London Nation*, because he could and did. I can remember him at an Academy Press View making the interminable round with a business-like briskness until, perhaps in the first hour and the last room, he would come

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upon the painting that gave him the peg for his eloquence, make an elaborate study of it, tell us his task was finished, and hurry off exultant. But envy him as I might, I couldn't borrow his briskness. I had to plod on all morning and again all afternoon until the Academy closed, to look at every picture before I could be sure which was the right peg or whether there might not be a dozen pegs and more. And I had to collect elaborate notes, not daring to trust to my memory alone, and after that to re-write pages that did not satisfy me. Just to see the Academy meant an honest day's labour and in Paris there were two *Salons*, each immeasurably bigger, and innumerable smaller shows into the bargain. And yet, that laborious May week never seemed to me so much toil as pleasure.

There was a great deal about Paris the toil left me no chance to find out. I should not like to say how many of its sights I have failed regularly to see during the visit I have paid to it every year now for over a quarter of a century. But at least I have learned the best thing worth knowing about it, which is that in no other town can toil look so uncommonly like pleasure, in no other town is it so easy to play hard and to work hard at the same time: precisely the truth the Baedeker

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student has a knack of missing, the truth the special kind of foreigner, for whom Paris would not be Paris if he could not believe it the abomination of desolation, goes out of his way to miss. I have met some of my own countrymen who have seen everything in Paris but never Paris itself—the old story of not seeing the wood for the trees—and who are absolutely convinced that it is a town in which all the people think of is amusement and that a more frivolous creature than the Parisian never existed. From their comfortable seat of judgment in the correct hotels and the correct show places, they cannot look as far as the schools and factories that make Paris the centre of learning for the world and of industry for France, and they are in their way every bit as dense as the English who take their pleasure so seriously they cannot understand the French who take their work gaily. “*Des blagueurs même au feu,*” a Belgian officer the other day described to me the French soldiers who had been fighting at his side, and I think it rather finer to face Death—or Work—laughing than in tears. If Paris were not so gay on the surface I am sure I should not find it so stimulating, though how it would be if I lived there I have never dared put to the test, unwilling to run whatever risk there might be if



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I did. I prefer to keep Paris in reserve for a working holiday or, indeed, any sort of holiday, a preference which, if Heine is to be trusted, I share with *le bon Dieu* of the old French proverb who, when he is bored in Heaven, opens a window and looks down upon the *Boulevards* of Paris.

At the first sight, the first sound, the first smell of Paris, the holiday feeling stirred within us. The minute we arrived we began to play at our work as we never did in London, as it never would have occurred to us there that we could.

The Academy, only the week before, had given us the same chance to meet, the same chance to talk, the same chance to lunch together, and of the lunch it had got to be our habit to make a Press Day function. Nowadays at the Academy Press View, when I am hungry, I run up to Stewart's at the corner of Bond Street for a couple of sandwiches, and excellent they are, but, as I eat them in my solitary corner, no flight of my sluggish imagination can make them seem to me more than a stern necessity. There was, however, a festive air about the old Press Day lunch when, towards one o'clock, some six or eight of us adjourned to Solferino's, another vanished landmark of my younger days in London. It was in Rupert Street, the street of Prince Florizel's

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Divan, which was appropriate, for Bob Stevenson was always with us and but for Bob Prince Florizel might never have existed to run a Divan in Rupert or any other street. Solferino's had a Barsac that Bob liked to order, chiefly I fancy for all it represented to him of Paris and Lavenue's and Barbizon and student days, and the old memories warming him over it as lunch went on, he would unfold one theory of art after another until suddenly a critic, more nervous than the rest, would take out his watch, and the hour he saw there would send us post-haste back to Piccadilly and the Academy, which at that time thought one Press Day sufficient.

But the lunch that seemed a festivity at Solferino's never gave us the holiday sense Paris filled us with from the early hour in the morning when, after our little breakfast, we met downstairs in the unpretentious hotel in the Rue St. Roch where most of us stayed—if we did not stay instead at the Hotel de l'Univers et Portugal for the sake of the name. The Rue St. Roch was convenient and if we were willing to climb to the top of the narrow house, where the smell of dinner hung heavy on the stairs all through the afternoon and evening, we could have our room for the next to nothing at all that suited our

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purse, and the dining-room—the Coffee Room in gilt letters on its door would have frightened us from it in any case—was so tiny it was a kindness to the *patron* not to come back for the midday breakfast or the dinner that we could not have been induced to eat in the hotel, under any circumstances, for half the big price he charged. The day's talk was already in full swing as we steamed down the Seine, or walked under the arcade of the *Rue de Rivoli* and along the *Quais*, in the cool of the May morning, to the new *Salon* which was then in the *Champ-de-Mars*. And one morning at the *Salon* made it clear to me, as years at the Academy could not, why French criticism permits itself to speak of art as a “game” and of the artist's work as “amusing” and “gay.” There were words that got into my article as persistently as the lilacs and the horse-chestnuts.

## II

If we brought to Paris a talent for talk and youth for enjoyment, Paris at the moment was providing liberally more than we could talk about or had time to enjoy. London may have been wide awake—for London—in the Nineties, but it was half asleep compared to Paris and would not have been awake at all if it had not gone to



Etching by Joseph Pennell

IN THE CHAMPS-ELYSEES



## NIGHTS: IN PARIS

Paris for the "new" it bragged of so loud in art and every excitement it cultivated, and for the "*fin-de-siècle*," that chance phrase passed lightly from mouth to mouth in Paris of which it made a serious classification.

I have watched with sympathetic amusement these late years one new movement, one new revolt after another, started and led by little men who have not the strength to move anything or the independence to revolt against anything, except in their boast of it, and who would be frightened by the bigness of a movement and revolt like the Secession from the old *Salon* that followed the International Exposition of 1889. I feel how long ago the Nineties were when I hear the young people in Paris to-day talk of the two *Salons* as the *Artistes-Français* and the *Beaux-Arts*. In the Nineties we, who watched the parting of the ways, knew them only as the Old *Salon* and the New *Salon* because that is what we saw in them and what they really were—unless we distinguished them as the *Champ-de-Mars Salon* and the *Champs-Élysées Salon*, for another ten years were to pass before there was a *Grand Palais* for both to move into. We could not write about either without a reminder of the age of the one and the youth of the other, the Old *Salon*



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remaining the home of the tradition that has become hide-bound convention, and the new *Salon* offering headquarters to the tradition that is being "carried on," as we were forever pointing out, borrowing the phrase from Whistler. We were given in the Nineties to borrowing the things Whistler said and wrote, for we knew, if it is not every critic who does to-day, that he was as great a master of art criticism as of art.

What the men who undertook to carry on tradition did for us was to arrange a good show. They had to, if it meant taking off their coats and rolling up their sleeves and putting themselves down to it in grim earnest, for it was the only way they could justify their action and the existence of their Society, and their choice of a President, the very name of Meissonier seeming to stand for anything rather than secession and experiment and revolt. For the first few exhibitions many of the older men got together small collections of their earlier work that had not been shown publicly for years, and the new *Salon's* way of arranging each man's work in a separate group or panel made it tell with all the more effect. And then there was the excitement of coming upon paintings or statues long familiar, but only by reputation or reproduction. I cannot

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forget how we thrilled in front of Whistler's *Rosa Corder*, which we were none of us, except Bob Stevenson, old enough to have seen when Whistler first exhibited it in London and Paris to a public unwilling to leave him in any doubt as to its indifference, how we talked and talked and talked until we had not time that morning to look at one other painting in the gallery, how it was not the fault of our articles if everybody did not squander upon it the attention refused not much more than a decade before. And the younger men of the moment had to summon up every scrap of individuality they possessed to be admitted, and not to be admitted meant too much conservatism or too much independence. And credentials of fine work had to be presented by the artists from all over the world—Americans, Scandinavians, Dutchmen, Belgians, Russians, Italians, Germans, Austrians, Spaniards,—who couldn't believe they had come off if the New *Salon* did not let them in, and half the time they hadn't. And with all it was just for the pride of being there, they were not out for medals, since the New *Salon* gave no awards. And altogether there was about as wide a gulf of principle and performance as could be between the two *Salons* that are now separated by not much more than

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the turnstiles in the one building that shelters them both.

And sparks of originality gleamed here and there; the passion for adventure had not flickered out—at every step through the galleries some subject for the discussion we exulted in stopped us short. It might be Impressionism, Sisley still showing if Monet did not, and Vibrism and Pointillism and all the other *isms* springing up and out of it. It might be Rosicrucianism and Symbolism which had just come in, and Sar Péladan—does anybody to-day read the Sar's long tedious books, bought by us with such zeal and promptly left to grow dusty on our shelves?—and Huysmans and their fellow teachers of Magic and members of the *Rose-Croix* were being interpreted in paint and in black-and-white, and if the interpretations did not interpret to so prosaic a mind as mine, it mattered the less because they were often excuse for a fine design. And the square brush mark lingered, and much was heard of the broken brush mark, and values had not ceased to be absorbing, nor *la peinture au premier coup* and *la peinture en plein air* to be wrangled over. And a religious wave from nobody knew where swept artists to the Scriptures for motives and sent them for a back-

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ground, not with Holman Hunt to Palestine, but to their own surroundings, their own country, to the light and atmosphere each knew best—Lhermitte's Christ suffered little children to come unto Him in a French peasant's cottage; Edelfelt's Christ walked in the sunlight of the North; Jean Béraud's Christ found Simon the Pharisee at home in a Parisian club; and no landscape, realistic, impressionistic, decorative, was complete unless a familiar figure or group came straying into it from out the Bible. Much that was done perished with the group or the fad that gave it birth, much when suddenly come upon now on the walls of the provincial gallery looks disconcertingly old-fashioned. But nevertheless, the movement, the energy, the life of the Nineties was a healthy enemy to that stagnation which is a death trap for art.

And Black-and-White was a section to be visited in the freshness of the morning, not to be put off, like the dull, shockingly over-crowded little room at the Academy, to the last hurried moments of fatigue—a section to devote the day to and then to leave only for the bookstall or bookshop where we could invest the money we had not to spare in the books and magazines and papers illustrated by Carlos Schwabe and

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Khnopf and Steinlen and Willette and Caran D'Ache and Louis Legrand and Forain and the men whose work in the original we had been studying and laying down the law about for hours. And the artist's new invention, his new experiment, came as surely as the spring—now the original wood block and now the colour print, one year the draughtsman's Holbein-inspired portrait and another the poster that excited us into collecting Chéret and Toulouse-Lautrec at a feverish rate and facing afterwards, as best we could, the problem of what in the world to do with a collection that nothing smaller than a railroad station or the hoardings could accommodate.

And the Sculpture court was not the accustomed chill waste, dreary as the yard crowded with marble tombstones. If nobody else had been in it—and many were—Rodin was there to heat the atmosphere, his name kindling a flame of criticism long before his work was reached. Beyond his name he was barely known in London, where I remember then seeing no work of his except his bust of Henley, who, during a visit to Paris, I believe his only one, had sat to Rodin and then, ever after, with the splendid enthusiasm he lavished on his friends, had preached



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Rodin. But in Paris at the New *Salon* there was always plenty of the work to explain why the name was such a firebrand—disturbing, exciting, faction-making—as I look back, culminating in the melodramatic Balzac that would have kept us in hot debate for all eternity had there not been innumerable things to interest us as much and more.

The critic has simply to take his task as we took ours and not another occupation in life can prove so brimming over with excitement. In the early Nineties I had not a doubt that it could always be taken like that. I would not have believed the most accredited prophet who prophesied that we would outlive our interest in the New *Salon*. And yet, a year came when, of the old group, only D. S. MacColl and I met in the *Champ-de-Mars* and he, with boredom in his face and voice, assured me he had found nothing in it from end to end except a silk panel decorated by Conder, and so helped to kill any belief I still cherished in the emotion that does not wear itself out with time.

However, this melancholy meeting was not until the Nineties were nearing their end, and up till then our days were an orgy of art criticism and excitement in it. In Paris, as in Rome, as in



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Venice, as in London, only night set me free for the pleasure that was apart from work. As a rule, none of us dared at the *Salons* to interrupt our work there even to make a function of the midday breakfast, as we did of lunch at the Academy, the days in Paris being so remarkably short for all we had to do in them. We were forced to treat it as a mere halt, regrettable but unavoidable, in the day's appointed task, whether we ate it at the *Salon* to save time or in some near little restaurant to save money. Often we were tempted, and few temptations are more difficult to resist than the unfolding of the big, soft French napkin at noon and the arrival of the radishes and butter and the long crisp French bread. When I was alone I escaped by going to one of the little tables in that gloomy corner of the *Salon* restaurant where there was no napkin to be unfolded, no radishes and butter to lead to indiscretion, and nothing more elaborate was served than a sandwich or a *brioche*, a cup of coffee or the glass of Madeira which sentiment makes it a duty for the good Philadelphian to drink whenever and wherever it comes his way. The temptation being so strong, it is useless to pretend that we never fell. If we had not, I should not have memories of breakfasts in the

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*Salon*, under the trees at Ledoyen's, on the *Tour Eiffel*, in the classic shade of the *Palais Royal* from which all the old houses had not been swept away, and as far from the scene of work as the close neighborhood of the *Bourse* where we could scarcely have got by accident. But the thought of the work waiting was for me the disquieting mummy served with every course of the feast. Not until the *Salon* door closed upon my drooping back and weary feet, turning me out whether I would or no, in the late hours of the afternoon, was I at liberty to remember how many other things there are in life besides work.

### III

The hour when all Paris had settled down to the business of pleasure—to proving itself the abomination of desolation to those who were already too sure to be in need of a proof—was an enchanting hour to find one's self at liberty. The heat of the day was over, the air was cool, the light golden, the important question of dining could be considered in comfort on enticing little chairs in the shady alleys of the *Champs-Élysées* or, better still, on little chairs no less enticing with little tables in front of them at the nearest *café*, where an *apéritif* was to be sipped even if

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it were no more deadly than a *groseille* or a *grenadine*. What the *apéritif* was did not matter; what did, was the reason it gave for half an hour's loafing before dinner with all the loafing town.

Had we lived in Paris, no doubt we would have done as we did in Rome and Venice and have gone every night to the same restaurant where the same greeting from the same smiling *patron* and the same table in the same corner awaited us. But change and experiment and a good deal of preliminary discussion over an *apéritif* were more in the order of a week's visit. As a rule, we preferred the small restaurant that was cheap, as we were most of us impecunious, also the restaurant that was out-of-doors, out-of-doors turning the simplest dinner into a feast. However, nobody yet was really ever young who was never reckless. Occasionally we dined joyously beyond our means, and one memorable year we devoted our nights to giving each other dinners where the best dinners were to be had. Those alone who are blest with little money and the obligation of making that little can appreciate the splendour of our recklessness, just as those alone who work all day and eat sparingly can have the proper regard for a good dinner. I do



Etching by Joseph Pennell

THE HALF HOUR BEFORE DINNER



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not regret the recklessness, I am not much the poorer for it to-day whatever I was at the time, and I should have missed something out of life had I not once dined recklessly in Paris. Moreover, our special business was the study of art and in Paris dining and art are one, though the foolish man in less civilized countries preaches that to eat for any other purpose than to live is gluttony. The clear intellect of the French saves them from that mistake, and I have entertained hopes for the future of my own country ever since one wise American,—Henry T. Finck,—discovering the truth that the French have always had the common sense to know, proclaimed it in a book which I have honoured by placing it in my Collection of Cookery Books with Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin and Dumas.

At the time we were more concerned with the dinner than the philosophy of dining. Our one aim was to dine well, whether it was the right thing or the wrong, even whether or no it sent us back to London bankrupt. We did not flinch before the price we paid, and if we were too wise to measure the value of the dinner by its cost, we were proud of the bigness of the bill as the “visible sign,” the guarantee of success. It was a tremendous triumph for J. when he paid the



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biggest of all, which he did, not so much because he set out to deliberately as because, by the choice of chance, he had invited us to Voisin's in the Rue St. Honoré, where the red-cushioned seats, the mirrors, the white paint, the discreet gilding, the air of retirement, the few elderly, rotund, meditative diners, each dining with himself, were all typical of the old classical Paris restaurant, and assured us beforehand of a good dinner and a price in keeping. That we ate asparagus from Argenteuil and *petites fraises des bois* I know because the season was spring; that the wine was good I also know because the reputation of Voisin's cellar permitted of no other. And I am as sure that the *menu* was so short that ours would have seemed the dinner of an anchorite in the City of London, for if we could not dine often we were masters of the art of dining when we did, and we understood, as the Lord Mayor and the City Companies of London, celebrated for their dinners, do not, that dining is not an art when the last course cannot be enjoyed as much as the first. As I keep the family accounts, I was obliged to pay in another way for J.'s triumph at Voisin's when I got back to London and faced a deficit that had to be balanced somehow in my weekly bills for the rest of the month. But, at

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least, if abstaining has to be done, London is the easiest place to abstain in as Paris is the best to dine in.

The Publisher who was with us that year gave his dinner at the LaPérouse on the *Quai des Grands-Augustins*, and it was not his fault if he fell short of J.'s triumph by a few francs. The giver of a dinner at the LaPérouse in the happy past enjoyed the fearful pleasure of not knowing how much he was spending until he called for his bill, price being too trivial a detail for a place in the *menu*, and usually when the bill came it exceeded his most ambitious hopes. The Publisher must have hit upon Friday, for the perfume of *Bouillabaisse* mingles with my memories of the dinner in the little low *entresol* where, by stooping down and craning our necks, we could see the towers of *Notre-Dame* from the window, and where the big, tall, handsome, black-bearded *patron*, alarmingly out of scale with the room, came to make sure of our pleasure in his dishes—he would rather the bill had gone unpaid than have seen the dinner neglected. I think there was a bottle of some special Burgundy in its cradle, for rarely in his life, I fancy, has the Publisher felt so in need of being fortified. Early in the day he had been guilty of the astonishing in-

discretion, as it then seemed, of buying three Van Goghs. For this happened years before anybody had begun to buy Van Gogh—years before anybody had begun to hear of Van Gogh—years before Post-Impressionism had been invented and had launched its crop of Cubists and Futurists and Vorticists as direct descendants of Van Gogh and Cézanne who would assuredly have been the first to repudiate them. The Publisher had gone unsuspectingly, confidingly, with J. to *Montmartre* and there, among other haunts, into the now celebrated little shop where the paintings Van Gogh used to give in exchange for paints littered the whole place, and where the dealer thought it a bargain if, for a few francs, he could get rid of canvases that now fetch their hundreds and thousands of pounds. J. would have invested had he had the few francs. Not having them, he persuaded the Publisher to, and to buy three of the best into the bargain, and never did his own empty pockets stand in the way of a more profitable investment, for had he bought not all but only a few in this wilderness of Van Goghs, and had he sold them again as he would never have done, we might now, if we chose, dine every night at the LaPérouse or Voisin's and prepare for the reckoning without a tremor. If I write of the

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buying of these pictures as if they were stocks and shares, it is because that is the way the creators of the "Van Gogh-Cézanne-Gauguin boom" have appraised them, appealing to the modern collector who collects for the money in art, not the beauty. That night at the LaPérouse the Publisher was dazed by his unexpected rashness as art patron; to-day, when he points to the one of the three paintings still hanging on his walls, he flatters himself that he discovered Van Gogh before the multitude.

Bob Stevenson took us to dine at Lavenue's in Montparnasse, and if he had not of his own free will we should have compelled him to. He belonged there. At Lavenue's he and Louis Stevenson dined when they were young in Paris, it was always cropping up in Bob's talk of the old days, it plays its part—"the restaurant where no one need be ashamed to entertain the master"—in the opening chapters of *The Wrecker*, which I think as entertaining as any chapters Louis Stevenson ever wrote in that or any other book. The dinner, of which I recall nothing in particular, did not interest me as much as the place itself. To see Bob Stevenson at Lavenue's was like seeing Manet at the *Nouvelle Athènes* or Dr. Johnson at the Cheshire Cheese, and to make the

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background complete Alexander Harrison, with two or three American painters of his generation, was dining at a near table.

He shall be nameless who gave the dinner at Marguery's. The dinner was all it should have been, for we ate the sole called after the house. It was the provider of it who proved wanting. I was brought up to believe that the host, when there is a host, should pay his bill. A large part of my life has been spent in getting rid of the things I was brought up to believe, but this particular belief I have never been able to shed and I confess I was taken aback—let me put it at that—when the white paper neatly folded in a plate, served at the end of dinner, was passed on to one of the guests. If the debt then run into was not paid does not much matter after all these years, or perhaps if it was not it has the more interest for the curious observer of modes and moods. In this case, the whole incident could be reduced to a kindness on the part of the debtor, sacrificing himself to show how right Bob Stevenson was when he said, as Robert Louis Stevenson repeated after him in print, that while the Anglo-Saxon can and does boast that he is not as Frenchmen in certain matters of morals, it is his misfortune to be as little like them in their



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vigorous definition of honesty and the obligation of paying their debts.

That the fifth dinner was at the *Tour d'Argent* is not an achievement to be particularly proud of. On the contrary, it appears to me a trifle banal as I look back to it, for fashion was at the time sending Americans and English to the *Tour d'Argent* just as it was driving them on beautiful spring days into that horribly crowded afternoon tea place in the *Rue Daunou*—wasn't it?—or to order their new gowns at the new dress-makers in the *Rue de la Paix*, or to do any of the hundred and one other things that proved them up to the times, at home in Paris, initiated into *le dernier cri* or whatever new phrase they thought set the seal upon Parisian smartness. Frédéric's face was as well known as Ibsen's which it so resembled, his sanded floor was the talk of the tourists, the distinguished foreigner struggled to have his name on Frédéric's *menu*, and as for Frédéric's pressed duck it had degenerated into as everyday a commonplace as an oyster stew in New York or a chop from the grill in London. The bill at the end of the evening might be all that the occasion demanded of the man who was giving the dinner, but his choice of restaurant could not convict him of originality,



or of sentiment either. But I do not know why I grumble when the dinner was so good. The *Tour d'Argent* had not fallen as most restaurants fall when they attract patrons from across the Channel. Frédéric's cooking was beyond reproach. Even the theatrical ceremony over his pressed duck could not spoil its flavour.

The sixth evening saw us at *Prunier's*, eating the oysters that it would have been useless to go to *Prunier's* and not to eat (we must have been in Paris unusually early in May that year), and if it was not the season to eat the snails for which *Prunier's* is equally renowned, my heart was not broken. It may give me away to confess that I do not like them, since snails are one of the unconsidered trifles that no Autolycus posing as *gourmet* should turn a disdainful back upon. But what can I do? It is a case of Dr. Fell, and that is the beginning and end of it. And if it wasn't the season for snails, and if I wouldn't have eaten them if it had been, in *Prunier's* gilded halls other delicacies are served, and when I summon up remembrance of those dinners past, *Prunier's* does not exactly take a back seat.

But naturally, the most important dinner in my opinion was mine at the *Cabaret Lyonnais* in the *Rue de Port-Mahon*, where never again

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can I invite my friends, for the *Cabaret* has gone into the land of shadows with so many of the group who sat round my table. At the time, there was no looking back, no sad straying into a dead past to spoil a good dinner—at the worst, a fleeting moment of discomfort when we selected the tench swimming in the tank close to our table and saw them carried off to the kitchen to be cooked for us. It was the custom of the house, intended to be a pleasing assurance that our fish was fresh, but a custom with just a savour in it of cannibalism. I have never cared to be on speaking terms with the creatures I am about to eat. I squirm when I see the lobster for my salad squirming, though I know the risk if it should not squirm at all. Had I lived in the country among my own chickens and pigs and lambs, I should have been long since a confirmed vegetarian. But to go to the *Cabaret Lyonnais* unwilling to swallow my scruples with my fish would have been as useless as to go to Simpson's in London and object to a cut from the joint, as I do object, which is why I seldom go. Anyway, we did not have to see the beef killed for the *filet* which at the *Cabaret* we were expected to eat after the tench and with the potatoes to which the city of Lyons also gives its name, so asso-

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ciating itself forever with the perfume of the onion. And, as in the Provinces, the wine was the *petit vin gris* which I never can drink without a vision of the straight, white, poplar-lined roads of France, sunshine, a tandem tricycle or two bicycles, J. and myself perched upon them, and by the way friendly little inns with a good breakfast or dinner waiting, and a big carafe of the pale light wine served with it. That my dinner was comparatively cheap would at normal times have been for me delightfully in its favour. But that it was the cheapest of all in that week of dinners meant that I came out last in the race when, by every law of justice, I should have been first. In Paris as in London my "greedy column," as my friends called it with the straightforwardness peculiar to friends, had to be written every week for the *Pall Mall* and mine was the enviable position of finding my copy in eating good dinners no less than in going to the *Salons*. If any one had an irreproachable excuse for extravagant living, it was I.

But even I, with the excuse, could not afford the extravagance—one weekly article did not pay for one cheap dinner for eight—at the *Cabaret Lyonnais*. And as the rest of the party were without the excuse and no better equipped for

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the extravagance, we never again gave each other dinners on the same lavish scale and rarely on any scale, henceforward ordering them on the principle of what Philadelphia in my youth called "a Jersey treat." I do not say that economy was invariably our rule. We could be, on occasions, so rash that before our week was up we had to begin to count our francs, put by for the boat sandwich and the reluctant tips of the return journey, and eat the last meals of all in the Duval, which, if admirable as a place to economize in, is no more conducive to gaiety than a London A.B.C. shop or Childs's in New York. Once we were so reduced that at noon I was left to a lonely *brioche* at the *Salon*, and the men went to breakfast at the nearest cabman's eating-house, where they made the sensation of their lives, without meaning to and without finding in it any special compensation. The most respectable of the respectable architectural group of our Thursday nights was of the party and where he went the top hat and frock coat, in which I used to think he must have been born, went too. If his fashion-plate correctness—men wore frock coats then—made him conspicuous at our Thursday nights it can be imagined what he was sitting with his coat tails in the gutter at the cabman's

table where the glazed hat and the three-caped coat of the Paris *cocher* set the fashion. He had the grace to be ashamed of himself, often apologizing for his clothes and assuring us that he could not help himself, which was his reason, I fancy, for accepting at an early age the professorial chair where the decorum of his hat and coat was in need of no apology.

## IV

I have said we were young. It seems superfluous to add that now and then, in the sunshine of the perfect May day, with the call of the lilacs and the horse-chestnuts getting into our heads as well as into my copy, the *Salon* grew stuffy beyond endurance, work became a crime, and we put up our catalogues and note-books before the closing hour and hurried anywhere just to be out-of-doors, as if our sole profession in life was to idle it away. After all, only the prig can be in Paris when May is there and not play truant sometimes.

The year Paris chose our week to show how hot it can be in May when it has a mind to, was the year I got to learn something of the Paris suburbs. The joyous expedition which ended our every day that year was so in the spirit of Har-



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land that I should be inclined to look upon him as the tempter, had we not, with the usual amiability of the tempted, met him more than half way. Still, he excelled us all in the knack of collecting us from our work, no matter how it had scattered us or in what quarter of the town we might be, and carrying us off suddenly out of it in directions we none of us had dreamed of the minute before, just as he would collect and carry us off suddenly in London. Only, he was more resourceful in Paris because in Paris more resources were made to his hand. There are as beautiful places round London—that is, beautiful in the English way—as round Paris, but they do not invite to a holiday with the charm no sensible man can resist. The loveliness of Hampton Court and Richmond and Hampstead Heath and the River is not to be denied and yet, gay as the English playing there manage to look, the only genuine gaiety is the Bank Holiday maker's. Tradition consecrates the loveliness bordering upon Paris to the gaiety to which Gavarni and Murger are the most sympathetic guides, and none could have been more to Harland's fancy. He was very like his own favourite heroes, or I ought to say his own favourite heroes were very like him. For it is Harland



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who talks through his own pages with his own charming fantastic blend of philosophy and nonsense, Harland who refuses to believe in an age of prose and prudence, Harland who is determined to see the romance, the squalor, the pagantry, the humour of this jumble-show of a world, not merely at ease from the stalls, but struggling with the principal *rôle* on the stage, or prompting from behind the scenes. When he was bent upon leading us to the same near, inside, part in the spectacle, it was extraordinary how, as if by inspiration, he always hit upon the right expedition for the time of the year and the mood of the moment.

I remember the afternoon he said St. Cloud it seemed as inevitable that we must go there as if St. Cloud had been our one thought all day long, the evening reward promised for our day's labour; just as on the boat steaming down the Seine and in the park wandering under the trees and among the ruins, I felt that the afternoon was the one of all others predestined for our delight there. The beauty provided by St. Cloud and the mood we brought for its enjoyment met at the hour appointed from all eternity.

Artists, it is supposed, and not without reason, are trained to see beauty more clearly and there-

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fore to feel it more acutely than other people. But my long experience has taught me that it is the lover of beauty who can dare to be flippant in the face of it, just as it is the devout who can afford to talk familiarly of holy things. Besides, artists work so hard that they have the sense to know how important it is to be foolish at the right time. That is the secret of all the delicious absurdities of what the French called the *Vie de Bohème* until the outsider who did not understand made a tiresome *cliché* of it. The right time for our folly we felt was the golden May evening and the right place a beautiful Paris suburb, time and place consecrated to folly by generations of artists and students. Below us, at St. Cloud, stretched the wide beautiful French landscape, with its classical symmetry and its note of sadness, in the pure clear light of France, the Seine winding through it towards Paris; round us was the park as classical in its lines and masses, and with its note of sadness the stronger because of the tragic memories that haunt it; in the foreground were my companions agreeably playing the fool and posing as living statues on the broken columns: he whose solemnity of demeanour accorded with his belief that his real sphere was the pulpit, throwing out an

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unaccustomed leg as Mercury on one column, and on another the Architect, an apologetic Apollo in frock coat with silk hat for lyre. In my light-heartedness, and accustomed to the ways of the English, I thought them absurd but funny. A French family, however, who passed by chance looked as if they wondered, as the French have wondered for centuries, at the sadness with which the Englishman takes his pleasures.

Beardsley was one of the party. It was the first time he was with us in Paris, the first time, for that matter, he had ever been there. He had clutched beforehand, like the youth he was, at the pleasure the visit promised, and I remember his joy in coming to tell me of it one morning in Buckingham Street. I remember too how amazing I thought it that, when he got there, he seemed at once to know Paris in the mysterious way he knew everything.

We had not heard of his arrival until we ran across him at the *Vernissage* in the New *Salon*. I think he had planned the dramatic effect of the chance meeting, counting upon the impression he would make as we met. I have said he was always a good deal of a dandy and I could see at what pains he had been to invent the costume he thought Paris and art demanded of him. He

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was in grey, a harmony carefully and quite exquisitely carried out, grey coat, grey waistcoat, grey trousers, grey Suède gloves, grey soft felt hat, grey tie which, in compliment to the French, was large and loose. An impression of this grey elegance is in the portrait of him by Blanche, painted, I think, the same year. As he came through the galleries towards us with the tripping step that was characteristic of him, a little light cane swinging in his hand, he was the most striking figure in them, dividing the stares of the staring *Vernissage* crowd with the *clou* of the year's New *Salon*: that portrait by Aman-Jean of his wife, with her hair parted in the middle and brought simply down over her ears, which set a mode copied before the season was over by women it disfigured, heroines who could dare the unbecoming if fashion decreed it. Beardsley knew he was being stared at and of course liked it, and probably would not have exchanged places with anybody there, not even with Carolus-Duran when, splendidly barbered, in gorgeous waistcoat, and with an air of casualness, the *cher maître et président* strolled into the restaurant at the supreme moment, carefully chosen, all the crowd there before him, their breakfast ordered, their first pangs of hunger stilled, and their atten-

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tion and enthusiasm at liberty for the greeting he counted upon, and got.

It may be that this scene of the older generation's triumph and the power of officialism in art told on Beardsley's nerves, or it may be it was simply because he was still young enough to believe nobody had ever been young before, but certainly by evening he had worked himself up into a fine frenzy of revolt. When we had got through our foolish game of living statues, and had settled down to dinner in a little restaurant, where a parrot's greeting of "*Après vous, madame! Après vous, monsieur!*" had vouched for the excellence of its manners, and where we could look across the river and see for ourselves how true were the effects that Cazin used to paint and that seemed so false to those who knew nothing of French twilight, and when Beardsley had finished his first glass of very ordinary wine well watered, he let us know what he thought about *les vieux* and their stultifying observance of worn-out laws and principles.

That started Bob Stevenson, who saw an argument and, for the sake of it, became ponderously patriarchal, hoary with convention. In point of years, it is true, he was older than any of us, but no matter what his age according to



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the Family Bible he was to the end, and would have been had he lived to be a hundred, the youngest in spirit of any company into which he ever strayed or could stray. His way, however, was, as Louis Stevenson described it, "to transmigrate" himself into the character or pose he assumed for the moment and no Heavy Father was ever heavier than he that night at St. Cloud. He spoke with the air of superior knowledge calculated to aggravate youth. With years, he assured Beardsley, men learned to value law and order in art, as in the state, at their worth; and, more and more inspired by his theme, as was his way, he grew preposterously wise and irritating, and he talked himself so successfully into every exasperating virtue of age that I could not wonder at the fierceness with which Beardsley turned upon him and denounced him roundly as conventional and academic and prejudiced and old-fashioned and all that to youth is most odious and that to Bob, when not playing a part, was most impossible. In harmony with his new *rôle*, he showed himself a miracle of forbearance under Beardsley's reproaches and sententious beyond endurance, actually called Beardsley young, his cardinal offence, for the young hate nothing so much as to be reminded of the youth for which



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the old envy them. Bob's almost every sentence began with the unendurable "at my age," which irritated Beardsley the more, while we roared at the farce of it in the mouth of one to whom years never made or could make a particle of difference. He wound up by the warning in soothing tones that Beardsley, in his turn burdened with years, would understand, would be able to make allowances, as all must as they grow older, or life would be an endless battle for the individual as for the race. Beardsley, luckily for himself, did not live to lose his illusions, and I fancy that to not one of us who listened to their talk did it occur that we were in danger of losing ours with age, so immortal does youth seem while it lasts.

The adventure of other afternoons worked out so surprisingly in Harland's vein that he might have invented it for his books or we might have borrowed it from them. The encounter with a peacock at a *café* in the *Bois*, to which he swept us off at the end of the hottest of those hot May days, was one of many that he afterwards made use of. Had he not, I might hesitate to recall it, knowing as I do that its wit must be lost upon the younger generation of to-day who face life and work with a severity, a solemnity, that alarms

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me. Their inability to take themselves with gaiety is what makes the young men of the Twentieth Century so hopelessly different from the young men of the Eighteen-Nineties. Their high moral ideal and concern with social problems would not permit them to see anything to laugh at in the experiment of feeding a peacock on cake steeped in absinthe, but it struck us, in our deplorable frivolity, as humorous at the time, our consciences the less disturbed because the bird was led into temptation in the manner of one to whom it was no new thing to yield. Harland, when he wrote the story with the mock seriousness he was master of, suggested that the crime was in its having been committed by an irreproachable British author, the sober father of a family. More momentous to us, accessories to the crime, was the fact that the cake stuck, a conspicuous lump, in the peacock's conspicuous throat. For what seemed hours we waited in tense agitation, torn between our desire to make sure the lump would disappear and our fears of discovery before it did. But the peacock was a gentleman in his cups and reeled away to swallow the lump and, I hope, to sleep off his debauch, in some more secluded spot where, if he were discovered, we should not be suspected.

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There was another afternoon I wonder Harland did not make use of which, had I been in a pedantic mood, I might have taken as an object-lesson in the art and occupation of shocking the *bourgeois*. We had been tempted and had yielded as unreservedly as the peacock, with the difference that our temptation took the form of the sunshine and the convenience of the train service at St. Lazare. No sane person with such sunshine out-of-doors could stay shut up in the *Salon* and a train was ready at St. Lazare, whenever we chose to catch it, to carry us off to Versailles. We were on our way at once after our midday breakfast.

Versailles was too beautiful on that beautiful day to ask anything of us except to live in the beauty, to make it ours for the moment; too beautiful to spare us time for bothering about those who had been there before us; too beautiful to allow the guide-book's fine print and maps and diagrams to blind our eyes to the one essential fact that the sun was shining, that the trees were in the greenest growth of their May-time, that the flowers were radiant with the fulfilment of spring and the promise of summer. As a place full of history we must have known it, had we never heard its name. History stared at us from

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the grey palace walls, history waylaid us in the formal alleys, lurked in the formal waters, haunted the formal gardens, overshadowed all the leafy pleasant places. There is no getting very far from history at Versailles no matter how hard one may try to. But we had no intention to let the dead past blot out the new life rekindling—to give its chill to the young spring day and its sadness to the foolish young people out for a holiday—to wither the fresh beauty that makes it good just to be alive, just to have eyes to see and freedom to use them.

I can write this now, but I would not have dared to say it then. Not only I, but every one of us, would have been as ashamed to be caught indulging in sentiment, or “bleating,” as the *National Observer*. The chances are we were talking as much nonsense as could be talked to the minute, for there was nothing we liked to talk better, nothing that served us so well to disguise the emotion we thought out of place in the world in which so obviously the self-respecting man’s business was to fight. But if I had not felt the beauty it would not now, so many years after, remain as my most vivid impression of the day.

We had Versailles to ourselves at first. We were alone in the park, alone in the alleys and

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avenues, alone in the gardens,—and the palace and its paintings could not tempt us in out of the sunshine. But such good luck naturally did not last and while we were loitering near the great fountain we saw a party of women with the eager, harassed, conscientious look that marks the personally-conducted school-ma'am on tour, bearing briskly down upon us, each with a red book in one hand, a pencil in the other, all engrossed in the personally-conducted school-ma'am's holiday task of checking off the sight disposed of, pigeon-holing the last guide-book fact verified. Their methodical progress was an offence to us in the mood we were in, would be an offence on a May day to the right-minded in any mood. I admit they could have turned upon us and asked what we were, anyway, but tourists as, after a fashion, no doubt we were. But they could not have accused us of the horrible conscientiousness, the deadly determination to see the correct things and to think the correct thoughts about them that dulls the personally-conducted to the world's real beauty and its meaning—the same tendency of the multitude to follow like sheep the accepted leader and never venture to explore fresh fields for themselves, that drove Hugo to writing his *Hernani*, and Gautier to wearing his red waist-



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coat, and all the other Romanticists to their favourite pastime of shocking the *bourgeois*. Versailles was so wonderful on the face of it that we resented the presence of people who needed a book to tell them so and to explain why; and we made our protest against the *bourgeois* in our own fashion or, to be exact, in Furse's fashion. He was then blessedly young, fresh from the schools and not yet sobered by Academic honours, though already a youthful member of the New English Art Club, from whom an attitude of general defiance was required. He raged and raved in his big booming voice, declared that tourists ought to be wiped off the face of the earth, that the women were a hideous blot on the landscape, that the guide-books were disgracefully out of tone, that it was unbearable and he wasn't going to bear it, and by his sudden satisfied smile I saw he had found out how not to. As the school-ma'ams came within earshot:

"It's beastly hot," he boomed to us, "what do you say to a swim?"

And he took off his coat, he took off his waistcoat, he took off his necktie, he unbuttoned his collar,—but already the school-ma'ams had scuttled away, the more daring glancing back once



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or twice as they went, their dismay tempered by curiosity.

Furse was pleased as a child over his success, vowed he was ready for all the tourists impudent enough to think they had a right to share Versailles with us, and, when a group of Germans talked their guttural way towards us, he had us all down on our knees, before we knew it, nibbling at the grass like so many Nebuchadnezzars escaped from Charenton—an amazing sight that brought the chorus of “Colossals” to an abrupt stop, and sent the Germans flying.

It may be objected that we were behaving in a fashion that children would be sent to bed without any supper for, that it was worse than childish to take pleasure in shocking innocent tourists much better behaved than ourselves. But there wasn't any pleasure in it. If we set out to shock them, it was to get rid of them, that was all we wanted, and it made me see that the succession of young rebels who have loved to *épater le bourgeois* never wanted anything more either—except the self-conscious young rebels who play at rebellion because they fancy it the surest and quickest way “to arrive.”

It is less easy to say why a beautiful day at Versailles should have sent us back to Paris sing-

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ing American songs—or to give credit, if credit is due, it was the rest of the party who returned to the music of their own voices; I, who to my sorrow cannot as much as turn a tune, never am so imprudent as to raise my voice in song and so add my discord to any singing in public or in private. Had they been heard above the noise of the train, the explanation of those who saw us when we got to St. Lazare probably would have been that we were a company of nigger minstrels. By accident, or sheer inattention, when we climbed upstairs on the double-decked suburban train, we chose the car just behind the locomotive and memory has not cleaned away the black that covered our faces when we climbed down again.

It was all very foolish—and no less foolish were the afternoons in the depths of Fontainebleau or the sunlit green thickets of Saint-Germain—no less foolish any of those afternoons in the forest or the park to which a long drive by train, or tram, had carried us. And I am prepared to admit the folly to-day as I sit at my elderly desk and look out to the London sky, grey and drear as if the spring had gone with my youth. But if I never again can be so foolish, at least I am thankful that once I could, that once long ago I was young in Paris, “the enchanted

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city with its charming smile for youth,"—that once I believed in folly and, in so believing, had learned more of the true philosophy of life than the most industrious student can ever dig out of his books.

### V

The afternoon at Versailles was the rare exception. We were too keen about our work, or too dependent on it, to play truant often, however gay the sunshine and convenient the trains. Nor was it any great hardship not to, especially after we had broken loose once or twice so successfully as to make sure we had not forgotten how. If we did stay in the *Salon* until we were turned out, the last to leave, Paris was neither so dull nor so ugly at night that we need sigh for the suburbs. It was an amusement simply to drink our coffee in front of a *café*, to go on with the talk that must have had a beginning sometime somewhere, but that never got anywhere near an end, and to watch the life of the Paris streets.

I had got my initiation into *café* life that first year in Italy and had finished my education by cycle on French roads, where every evening taught me the difference between the country

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where there is a *café* to pass an hour in over a glass of coffee after dinner, and England where choice in the small town then lay between immediate bed or the intolerable gloom of the Coffee Room. It is the real democrat like the Frenchman or the Italian who knows how to take his ease in a *café*; the Englishman, who hasn't an inkling of what the democracy he boasts of means, fights shy of it. He does not mind making use of it when he is away from home, but he is likely to be thanking his stars all the time that in his part of the world nothing so promiscuous is possible. I tried to point out its advantages once to an English University man.

"Aoh!" he said, "you know at Oxford we had our wines and we weren't bothered by people."

But it is just the people part of it that is amusing, the more so if the background is the Street of a French or an Italian town.

Some nights we went to the *Café de la Paix* on the *Rive Droite*; other nights, to the *Café d'Harcourt* on the *Rive Gauche*; and occasionally to the *Café de la Régence* where many artists went, especially foreign artists, and more especially Scandinavians. I seem to retain a vision of Thaulow, a blond giant more than fitting in the corner of the little raised enclosure in the front

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of the *café*. My one other recollection is of a story I heard there, though of the painter who told it I can recall only that he was a Belgian. If I recall the story so well, it must be because it struck me at the time as characteristic and in memory became forever after associated with the little open space I was looking over to as I listened, amused and interested, while the flower women pushed past their barrows piled high with the big round bunches of budding lilies-of-the-valley you see nowhere save in Paris. It is impossible for me to think of the *café* without thinking of the little *Place*, nor of the little *Place* without at once hearing again the artist's voice lingering joyfully over the adventures of his youth.

The story was one of a kind I had often listened to at the *Nazionale* in Rome and the *Orientale* in Venice—a story of student days—a story of two young painters coming to Paris in their first ripe enthusiasm, with devotion to squander upon the masters, upon none more lavishly than upon Jules Breton, which explains what ages ago it was and how young they must have been. They were at the *Salon*, standing in silent worship before Breton's peasant woman with a scythe against a garish sunset, when they



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heard behind them an adoring voice saying the things they were thinking to one they knew must be the *cher maître* himself, and they felt if they could once shake his hand life could hold no higher happiness. The worship of the young is pleasant to the old. Breton let them shake his hand and, more, he kept them at his side until his visit to the *Salon* was finished, and then sent them away walking on air. They were leaving the next day. In the morning they went to the *Rue de Rivoli* to buy toys to take home to their little brothers and sisters, and one selected a dog and the other a mill, and when wound up the dog played the drum and cymbals and the mill turned its wheel and, children themselves, they were ravished and would not have the toys wrapped up but carried them back in their arms to the hotel, stopping in the *Avenue de l'Opéra* to wind up the mill and see the wheel go round again. And as they stood enchanted, the mill wheel turning and turning, who should come towards them but the *cher Maître*. It was too late to run, too late to hide the mill with its turning wheel and the dog with its foolish drum. They longed to sink through the ground in their mortification—they, the serious students of yesterday, to be caught to-day playing like silly children in the



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open street. But how ineffable is the condescension of the great! The master joined them.

“*Tiens,*” he said, “and the wheel, it goes round? But it works beautifully. Let us wind it up again!”

Cannot you see the little comedy,—the fine old prophet with the red ribbon in his button-hole, the two trembling, adoring students, the toy with its revolving wheel, all in the gay sunlight of the *Avenue de l’Opéra*, and not a passer-by troubling to look because it was Paris where men are not ashamed to be themselves. The two painters preserved this impression of the kindness of the master long after they ceased to worship at the shrine of the peasant with her scythe posed against the sunset.

One duty the Boulevards of the Left Bank imposed upon us in the Nineties was the search for Verlaine and Bibi-la-Purée, and many another poet for all time and celebrity for the day, in the *cafés* where they waited to be found and I do not doubt were deeply disappointed if nobody came to find them. The fame of these great men, who were easily accessible when the *café* they went to happened to be known, had crossed to London with so much else London was labelling *fin-de-siècle*. To have met them, to be able to speak of

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them in intimate terms, to be authorities on the special vice of each, was the ambition of the yearning young decadents on the British side of the Channel, who imagined in the intimacy a proof of their own emancipation from it would have been hard to say what, their own genius for revolution if it was not clear what reason they had to revolt. We, who cultivated a withering scorn for decadence and the affectation of it, were moved by nothing more serious or ambitious than youth's natural desire to see and to know everything that is going on, and we could not have been very ardent in our search, for I never remember once, on the nights we devoted to the hunt, tracking these lions to their lair. However, at least one of our party had better luck when he started on the hunt without us. According to a rumour at the time, the respectable British author, sober father of a family, who fed the peacock on cake steeped in absinthe, was once seen in broad daylight with the *Reine de Golconde* on his arm, walking down the *Boul' Mich'* at the head of a band of poets.

Verlaine I did meet, but it was in London, where admiring, or philanthropic, young Englishmen brought him one winter to lecture and the subject as announced was "Contemporary

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French Poetry," and through all these years I have managed to preserve the small sheet of announcement with Arthur Symons's name and "kind regards" written below, a personal little document, for it was Symons who got up the show, and he and Herbert P. Horne who sold the tickets. Instead of lecturing, Verlaine read his verses to the scanty audience, all of whom knew each other, in the dim light of Barnard's Inn Hall, and the music of their rhythm was in his voice so that I was not conscious of the satyr-like repulsiveness of his face and head so long as he was reading. When he was not reading, the repulsiveness was to me overpowering and I shrank from his very presence. Nor was the shrinking less when I talked with him the night after his lecture, at a dinner where my place was next to his. He was like a loathsome animal with his decadent face, his yellow skin, and his little bestial eyes lighting up obscenely as he told me of the two women who would fight for the money in his pockets when he got back to Paris. Beyond this I have no recollection of his talk. The prospect before him apparently absorbed his interest, was the only good he had got out of his visit to London. The beauty of his own beautiful poems, I felt in disgust, should have made such vicious sordidness

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impossible. It revolted me that a man so degraded and hideous physically could write the verse I had loved ever since his *Romances sans Paroles* first fell into my hands, or, writing it, could be content to remain what he was. To be sure, the genius is rare whom it is not a disappointment to meet, and the hero-worshipper may be thankful when his great man is guilty of nothing worse than the famous writer in Tchekhof's play—so famous as to have his name daily in the papers and his photograph in shop windows—whose crime was to condescend to fish and to be pleased when he caught something.

### VI

The Nineties would not let us off from another entertainment as characteristic—as *fin-de-siècle*, the Englishman under the impression that he knew his Paris would have classified it—nor did we want to be let off, though it lured us indoors.

The big theatres had no attraction: to sit out a long play in a hot playhouse was not our idea of what spring nights were made for. Neither had the "Hells" and "Heavens," the fatuous, vulgar, indecent performances with catchpenny names, run for the foreigner who went to Paris so that he might for the rest of his life throw

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up hands of horror and say what an immoral place it was.

Once or twice we tried the out-door *Café-Chantant*, and we heard Paulus in the days when all Paris went to hear him, and Yvette Guilbert when she was still slim and wore the V-shaped bodice and the long black gloves, as you may see her in Toulouse-Lautrec's lithographs.

Once or twice we tried the big stuffy music-halls, also adapted to supply the travelling student of morals with the specimens he was in search of, but not dropping all local character in the effort. We seemed to owe it to the memory of Manet to go to the *Folies-Bergère* which cannot be forgotten so long as his extraordinary painting of the barmaid in the ugly fashions of the late Seventies is saved to the world. That natural desire of youth just to see and to know, that had carried us up and down the *Boulevards* of the *Rive Gauche* in pursuit of its poets, sent us to the *Casino de Paris* and the *Moulin Rouge*. But a first visit did not inspire us with a desire for a second, though I would not have missed the *Casino* if only for the imperishable memory of the most solemn of our critics dancing there with a patroness of the house and looking about as cheerful as a martyr at the stake, nor the *Moulin*



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*Rouge* for another memory as imperishable of the most socially pretentious leaving his partner, after his dance, with the "thanks awfully" of the provincial ballroom. I thought both dull places which nothing save their reputation could have recommended, even to those determined young decadents in London who were no prouder of their friendship with Bibi and Verlaine than of their freedom of the French music-halls, and who wrote of them with a pretence of profound knowledge calculated to *épater le bourgeois* at home, referring by name with easy familiarity to the dancers in the *Quadrille Naturaliste*, as celebrated in its way as Bibi in his, and explaining solemnly the *chahut* and the *grand écart* and *le port d'armes* and every evolution in that unpleasant dance. How it brought it all back to me the other day when I found in *The Gypsy*—the direct but belated offspring of *The Savoy*—a poem to *Nini-patte-en-l'air*. And does anybody now know or care who *Nini-patte-en-l'air* was? Or who *La Goulue* and the rest? Would anybody now go a step to see the *Quadrille* were any graceless acrobats left to dance it? These things belonged to the lightest of light fashions that passed with the Nineties, and the *Moulin Rouge* itself could burn down to the ground a few months ago



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and hardly a voice be heard in lament or reminiscence. Upon such rapidly shifting sands did the young would-be revolutionaries of London build their House of Decadence.

The entertainment worth the exchange of the pure May night for a smoke-laden, stuffy interior was in none of these places. Where we looked for it—and found it—was in the little *café* or *cabaret*—the *cabaret artistique* as it was then known in Paris—with a flair for the genius the world is so long in discovering, where the young poet read his verses, the young musician interpreted his music, the young artist showed his work in any manner the chance was given him to, to say nothing of the posters he sometimes designed for it and decorated Paris with: theatre and performance and advertisement impossible in any other town or any other atmosphere. London is too clumsy. Berlin is too ponderous, New York has not the right material home-grown, and the spirit of the original dies in the self-conscious imitation. Even in Paris a Baedeker star is its death-blow, the private guide's attention spells immediate ruin, nor can it survive more legitimate honours at home when they come. Like most good things it has its times and its seasons, and it was in the Nineties it gave forth its finest

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blossoms. We knew it was a pleasure to be snatched this year, for next who could say where it might be, and we set out to snatch it with the same diligence we had devoted one spring to eating dinners and another to playing in the suburbs, though we could make no pretence in a week to exhaust it.

Night after night we dined, we drank our coffee at the nearest *café*, we scrambled to the top of the big omnibus with the three white horses, now as dead as the performance it was taking us to, we journeyed across Paris to see or to hear the work of the young genius on the threshold of fame or oblivion. And if in an access of conscientiousness we had felt the need—as we never did—of a reason for our eagerness, we might have had it in the way our evening's entertainment invariably turned out to be the legitimate sequel of our day's work. For there wasn't a *cabaret* of them all that did not reflect somehow the things we had been busy studying and wrangling over ever since our arrival in Paris, the merit they shared in common being their pre-occupation with the art and literature of the day to which they belonged. The tiresome performance known as a *Revue*, which is all the vogue just now in the London music-halls, under-

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takes to do something of the same kind: to be, that is, a reflection of the events and interests and popular excitements of the day. But the wide gulf between the music-hall *Revue* and the old *Cabaret* performance is that art and literature could not, by hook or by crook, be dragged into the average Englishman's scheme of life.

If one night the end of the journey was the *Tréteau de Tabarin*—the hot and uncomfortable little room rigged up as a theatre, with hard rough wooden benches for the audience, and vague lights, and bare and dingy stage where men and women whose names I have forgotten read and recited and sang the *chansons rosses* that "all Paris" flocked there to hear—it was to have the argument from which we had freshly come continued and settled by one of the inspired young poets. For my chief remembrance is of the irreverent youth who summed up our daily dispute over Rodin's great melodramatic Balzac, with frowning brows and goitrous throat, wrapped in shapeless dressing-gown, that stood that spring in the centre of the sculpture court at the New *Salon*, and the summing up was in verse only a Frenchman could write, the satire the more bitter because the wit was so fine.

• A second night when we climbed the lumber-

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ing omnibus, we were bound for the *Chat Noir*. It had already moved from its first primitive quarters but had not yet degenerated into a regular show place, advertised in Paris and taken by Salis on tour through the provinces. Here, our justification was to find that everything, from the sign of the Black Cat, then hanging at the door and now hanging, a national possession, in the Carnavalet Museum, and the cat-decorations in the *café* and the drawings and paintings on the wall, to the performance in the big room upstairs, was by the men over whose work we had been arguing all day at the *Salon* and buying in the reproductions at the bookstalls and bookshops on the way back.

To see that performance upstairs we had each to pay five francs at the door, and we paid them as willingly as if they did not represent breakfast and dinner for the next day, and so many other people paid them with equal willingness that the room was crowded, though the show was of a kind that the same public in any town except Paris would have paid twice that sum to stay away from. Imagine Poe attracting customers for a New York saloon-keeper by reciting his poems! Imagine Keene or Beardsley making the fortunes of a London public-house by

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decorating its walls and showing his pictures on a screen! Or imagine the public of to-day, debauched by the "movies" and the music-hall "sketch," knowing that there is such a thing as poetry or art to listen to and look at!

But Salis,—the great Salis, inventor, proprietor, director of the *Chat Noir*, dealt only in poetry and art and music, and this is sufficient to give him a place in the history of the period, even if he were the mere exploiter filling his pockets by pilfering other people's brains that he was accused of being by his enemies. He crowded his *café* by letting poets whom nobody had heard of and whose destiny—some of them, Maurice Donnay for one—as staid Academicians nobody could have foreseen, try their verses for the first time in public; by giving the same splendid opportunity to musicians as obscure then, whatever heights at least two—Charpentier and Debussy—were afterwards to reach; and by allowing the artist, while the poet was the interpreter in beautiful words and the musician in beautiful sound, to show his wonderful little dramas in black-and-white, the *Ombres Chinoises* that were the crowning glory of the night's performance. From days in the *Salons*, from the illustrated papers and magazines and books we



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filled our bags with to take back to London, we could not measure the full powers of men like Willette and Caran d'Ache and Rivière and Louis Morin until we had seen also *The Prodigal Son*, *The March of the Stars*, and all the stories they told in those dramatic silhouettes—those marvellous little black figures, cut in tin, only a few inches high, moving across a white space small in due proportion, but so designed and posed and grouped by the artist as to give the swing and the movement and the passing of great armies until one could almost fancy one heard the drums beat and the trumpets call, or to suggest the grandeur and solemnity of the desert, the vastness of the sky, the mystery of the night. They have been imitated. Only a few months ago I saw an imitation in a London music-hall, with all that late inventions in photography and electric light could do for it. But no touch of genius was in the little figures and the elaboration was no more than clever stagecraft. The simplicity of the *Chat Noir* was gone, and gone the gaiety of the performers, and the pretence of gaiety is sadder than tragedy. Salis knew how to catch his poet, his musician, his artist, young,—that is where he scored.

It is possible that I was the more impressed



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by the beauty of the show because it was not of that side of the *Chat Noir* I had heard most. Its British admirers or critics, when they got back to London, had far more to say of it as a haunt of vice, if not as decadents to parade their wide and experienced knowledge of Paris, then as students who had gone there very likely to gather further confirmation of the popular British belief in Paris as the headquarters of vice and frivolity. To this day the hero or heroine of the British novel who is led astray is apt to cross the Channel for the purpose. It was a delicate matter to accomplish this in the Nineties when the novelist happened to be a woman, for even the "New Woman" cry, if it armed her with her own front-door key, could not draw all the bolts and bars of convention for her. I can remember the plight of the highly correct Englishwoman, upon whom British fiction depended for its respectability, who wanted to send her young hero from the English provinces to the *Chat Noir* in the course of a rake's progress, and who avoided facing the contamination herself by shifting to her husband the task of collecting the necessary local colour on the spot. She did well, for had she gone she could not have been so scandalized as the young Briton in her book was obliged to be for the sake

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of the story. Those who had eyes and ears for it could see and hear all the license they wanted, those who had eyes and ears for the beauty could rest content with that, and as far as my impression of the place goes, Salis, if he allowed license at the *Chat Noir*, refused to put up with either the affectation or the advertisement of it. I cannot forget the night when a young American woman took her cigarette case from her pocket and lit a cigarette. It would not have seemed a desperate deed in proper England where every other woman had begun to smoke in public, probably more in public than in private, for with many smoking was part of the "New Woman" crusade—"I never liked smoking," an ardent leader in the cause told me once, "but I smoked until we won the right to." France, or Salis, however, still drew a rigid line that refused women the same right in France, and with the American's first whiff he was bidding her good-night and politely, but firmly, showing her the door.

A third night, and I do not know that it was not the most amusing, the end of our journey was Bruant's *Cabaret du Mirliton*, in the remote *Boulevard Rochechouart*. I daresay there was not one of us who did not own a copy of Bruant's

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*Dans la Rue*, but we had bought it less because of his verses—some of us had not read a line of them—than because of Steinlen's illustrations, and I can still hear Harland upbraiding us for our literary indifference and urging it as a duty that we should not only read Bruant's songs, but go at once to hear him sing them. Harland had the provoking talent of looking as if his stories were the last thing he was bothering about, as if he was too busy enjoying the spectacle of life to think of work, when he was really working as hard as the hardest-working of us all. And as it was not very long after that his *Mademoiselle Miss* appeared, I have an idea that he hurried us off to Bruant's not solely to improve our literary taste, but quite as much to collect incidents for that gay little tale.

Bruant ran the *Mirliton* on the principle that the less easily pleasure is come by, the more it will be prized. There was no walking in as at the ordinary *café*, no paying for admission as upstairs at the *Chat Noir*. Instead, it amused him to keep people who wanted to get in standing outside his door while he examined them through a little grille, an amusement which, in our case, he prolonged until I was sure he did not like our looks and would send us away, and



Poster by Toulouse-Lautrec

ARISTIDE BRUANT  
OF THE CABARET DU MIRLITON



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that the reason was the responsibility he laid upon us all for the frock coat and top hat which the Architect could never manage to keep out of sight, skulk as he might in the background. But, of course, Bruant had no intention of sending us away and he kept up his little farce only to the point where our disappointment was on the verge of turning into impatience. It simply meant that he did not hold to the hail-fellow-well-met free-and-easiness which was the pose of Salis at the *Chat Noir*, but, at the *Mirliton*, was all for ceremony and dramatic effect. At the psychological moment he opened the door himself, a splendid creature, half brigand, half Breton peasant, in brown corduroy jacket and knee-breeches, high boots, red silk handkerchief tied loosely round his neck, big wide-brimmed hat on the back of his head, the passing pose of a poet who, I am told, rejoiced to give it up for a costume fitted to the more congenial pastime of raising potatoes. To have seen Toulouse-Lautrec's poster of him and his *Cabaret* was to recognize him at a glance.

To the noise of a strident chorus in choice *argot*, which I was told I should be thankful I did not understand, Bruant showed us into his *café*. It was more like an amateur museum, with its big Fifteenth Century fireplace, and its brasses



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and tapestries on the walls, and if the huge *Mirliton* hanging from the ceiling was not remarkable as a work of art, it should now, as historic symbol of the Nineties, have a place at the *Carnavalet* by the side of the sign of the *Chat Noir*. When we had time to look round, we saw that the severe ordeal through which we had passed had admitted us into the company of a few youths in the high stocks and long hair of the *Quartier Latin*, a *petit piou-piou* or so, two or three stray workmen, women whom perhaps it would be more discreet not to attempt to classify, all seated at little tables and harmlessly occupied in drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. The place was free from tourists, we were the only foreigners, the handsome Aristide evidently sang his songs for the pleasure of himself and the people.

It was after we had sat down at our little table and given the order required of us that the incidents of the evening began to play so neatly and effectively into Harland's plot. A scowl was on Bruant's handsome face as he strode up and down his *café-museum*, for the striding, it seemed, was only part of the regular performance. He should at the same time have been singing the songs we had come to hear, and he could not with-

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out the pianist who accompanied him, and the pianist had chosen this night of all others to be late. The scowl deepened, I felt something like a stir of uneasiness through the room, and I did not wonder, for Bruant looked as if he had a temper it might be dangerous to trifle with. And then the strange thing happened and, to our surprise and his, our party whom he had met with such disdain saved the situation. How we did it may be read, with the variations necessary to fit his tale, in Harland's book. We had our own musician—her name was not Mademoiselle Miss—and when she discovered what was the matter, and why Bruant was scowling so abominably, she was moved by the sympathy of one artist for another and offered her services. Bruant led her to the piano, she accompanied him as best she could, the music being new to her, he sang us his *St. Lazare* and *La Soularde*, all the while striding up and down with magnificent swagger, and was about to begin a third of his most famous songs when the pianist arrived, his unmistakable fright quickly lost in his bewilderment at being received with an amiability he had not any right to expect, and allowed to slip into his place at the piano unrebuked. Bruant, with the manners, the courteous dignity, of a prince, led our Mademoiselle

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Miss back to us, ordered bocks for her, for me—the only other woman at our table—and for himself, touched his with his lips, bowed, was gone and singing again before we could show that we had not yet learned to drain our glasses in the fashion approved of at the *Mirliton*.

So far Harland used this little episode much as it happened and made the most of it—I hope the curious who consult his story will be able to distinguish between his realism and his romance. But being mere man he missed the sequel which to the original of his Mademoiselle Miss and to me was the most dramatic and disturbing event of the evening. Gradually, as we sat at our table, watching Bruant and the company, it dawned upon us that Bruant did not exhaust the formalities of his entertainment upon the coming guest but reserved one for the parting guest which in our judgment was scarcely so amusing. For to every woman who left his *café*, Bruant's good-bye was a hearty kiss on both cheeks. We had the sense to know that, as we had come to the *Mirliton* of our own free will, we had no more right to quarrel with its rules than to refuse to show our press ticket at the *Salon* turnstile, or to give up our umbrellas at the door of the *Louvre*, or to question the regulations of any other place in

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Paris we chose to go to. If we insisted upon being made the exceptions to the farewell ceremony, and if Bruant would not let us off, could we resent it? And if the men of our party resented it for us, and if Bruant resented their resentment, how would that improve matters?

It was about as unpleasant a predicament as I have ever found myself in. We talked it over, but could see no way out of it, and in our discomfort kept urging the men to stay for just one more song and then just one more, greatly to their amazement, for they were accustomed to not wanting to go and having to beg us to stay. The evil moment, however, could not be put off indefinitely, and, with our hearts in our boots, we at last got up from the table. We might have spared ourselves our agony. Bruant, with the instinct and intelligence of the Frenchman, realized our embarrassment and I hope I am right in thinking he had his laugh over us all to himself, so much more than a laugh did we owe him. For what he did when we got to the door was to shake hands with us ceremoniously, each in turn, to repeat his thanks for our visit and his gratitude to the musician for her services, to take off his wide-brimmed hat—the only time that

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night—and to bow us out into the darkness of the *Boulevard Rochechouart*.

Following the example of Mademoiselle Miss in the story, unless it was she who was following ours, we finished the evening which had begun at the *Mirliton* by eating supper at the *Rat Mort*. It was an experience I cared less to repeat even than the visits to the *Casino de Paris* and the *Moulin Rouge*. As light and satisfying a supper could have been eaten in many other places, late as was the hour. Neither wit nor art entered into the entertainment as at the *Chat Noir* and Bruant's. Vice was at no trouble to disguise itself. On the contrary, it made rather a cynical display, I thought, and cynicism in vice is never agreeable. I give my impressions. I may be wrong. I have not forgotten that the harmless portrait by Degas of Desboutin at the *Nouvelle Athènes* scandalized all London in the Nineties. Everything depends on the point of view.

Anyway, another adventure I liked better was still to come before that long Paris night was at an end. It was so characteristic of Harland and his joy in the humorous and the absurd that I do not quite see why he did not let his Mademoiselle Miss share it. Outside the *Rat Mort*, in the early hours of the next morning, we picked up an old-



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fashioned one-horse, closed cab, built to hold two people, and of a type almost as extinct in Paris as the three-horse omnibus. It was the only cab in sight and we packed into and outside of it, not two but eight. As it crawled down one of the steep streets from *Montmartre* there was a creak, the horse stopped and, as quickly as I tell it, the bottom was out of the cab and we were in the street. Harland, as if prepared all along for just such a disaster, whisked the top hat so conspicuous in everything we did from the astonished Architect's head, handed it round, made a pitiful tale of *le pauvre cocher* and his hungry wife and children, and implored us to show, now or never, the charitable stuff we were made of. Considering it was the end of a long evening, he collected a fairly decent number of francs and presented them to the *cocher* with an eloquent speech, which it was a pity someone could not have taken down in shorthand for him to use in his next story. The *cocher*, the least concerned of the group, thanked us with a broad grin, drew up his broken cab close to the sidewalk, took the horse from the shaft, clambered on its back, rode as fast as he could go down the street, and disappeared into the night. A *sergent-de-ville*, who had been looking on, shrugged his shoulders; in



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his opinion, *cet animal là* was in luck and probably would like nothing better than the same accident every night, provided at the time he was driving ladies and gentlemen of such generosity. *Allez!* Didn't we know the cab was heavily insured, all Paris cabs were, we had made him a handsome present—*Voilà tout!*

And so wonderful is it to be young and in Paris that we laughed our way back as we trudged on foot through the now dark and empty and silent streets between *Montmartre* and our rooms. I doubt if I could laugh now at the fatigue of it. Of all the many ghosts that walk with me along the old familiar ways, the one keeping most obstinately at my side is that of my own youth, reminding me of the prosaic, elderly woman I am, who, even if the zest for adventure remained, would be ashamed to be caught plunging into follies like those of the old foolish nights in Paris that never can be again, or who, if not ashamed, would be without the energy to see them through to the end.

## VII

In Paris, as in London, a further ramble down those crowded, haunted, resounding Corridors of Time would lead me to many other nights of

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gaiety and friendliness and loud persistent talk.

Again, I would have my Whistler nights, the background now not our chambers, but the memorable apartment in the Rue du Bac *rez-de-chaussée* opening upon the spacious garden where, in the twilight, often we lingered to listen to the Missionary Monks in their spacious garden on the other side of the wall, singing the canticles for the Month of Mary so dear to me from my convent days—nights in the dining-room with its beautiful blue-and-white china, the long table and the Japanese “something like a birdcage” hanging over it in the centre, many once-friendly faces all about me, Whistler presiding in his place or filling the glasses of his guests as he passed from one to the other, always talking, saying things as nobody else could have said them, witty, serious, exasperating, delightful things, laughing the gay laugh or the laugh of malice that said as much as his words;—nights in the blue and white drawing-room, with the painting of Venus over the mantel, and the stately Empire chairs, and the table a litter of papers among which was always the last correspondence to be read, interrupted by his own comments that to those who heard were the best part of it—nights that will never perish as long as even one man, or woman,

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who shared in them lives to remember ;—Whistler nights even after Whistler had left us for the land where there is neither night nor day : nights these with the old friends who had loved him, with the painter Oulevey and the sculptor Drouet who had been his fellow students, with Théodore Duret who had been faithful during his years of greatest trial, friends who rejoiced in talking of Whistler and of all that had gone to make him the great personality and the greater artist ; but of the Whistler nights in Paris, as in London, I have already made the record with J. The story of them is told.

And along the same rich Corridors, I would come to nights only less worth preserving in the studios of artists, American and English, who studied and worked and lived in Paris—nights that have bequeathed to me the impression of great space, and lofty ceilings, and many canvases, and big easels, and bits of tapestry, and the gleam of old brass and pottery, and excellent dinners, and, of course, vehement talk, and a friendly war of words—nights with men irrevocably in the movement, whose work was conspicuous on the walls of the New *Salon* and had probably, a few hours earlier, kept us busy arguing in front of it and writing voluminous notes

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in our note-books—nights not the least stirring and tempestuous of the many I have spent in Paris, but nights of which my safe rule of silence where the living are concerned forbids me to tell the tale.

And one special year stands out when the little hotel in the Rue St. Roch was deserted for the Grand Hotel, and when all the nights seemed swallowed up in the International Society's business—not the International Society of Anarchists, but the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers in London, which, in those terribly enterprising Nineties, sent its deputation—J. included in it—to collect all that was most individual and distinguished in the *Salons* for its next Exhibition. It was a year of many wanderings in many directions to many studios of French artists, or foreign artists working in Paris—a year of many meetings of many artists night after night. But this clearly is not a story for me to tell, since the International was J.'s concern, not mine. In the hours away from my work I looked on, an outsider, but an amused outsider, marvelling as I have never ceased to marvel since the faraway nights in Rome, at the inexhaustible wealth of art as a subject of talk wherever artists are gathered together.

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And rambling still further into that past, I would stumble into American nights—nights with old friends, established there or passing through and run across by chance—nights of joy in being with my own people again, of hearing not English, but my native tongue and having life re-adjusted to the American point of view. Nobody knows how good it is to be with one's fellow-countrymen who has not been years away from them. But these also are nights that come within the forbidden zone—the zone where Silence is Golden.

### VIII

I have put down these memories of Paris nights and my yearly visit to Paris in the year when, for the first time since I began my work in its galleries, no *Salon* has opened to take me there in the springtime. With the coming of May the lilacs and horse-chestnuts bloomed with the old beauty and fragrance along the *Champs-Élysées* outside the *Grand Palais*, but inside no prints and paintings were on the walls, no statues in the great courts. To those admitted, the only exhibition was of the wounded, the maimed, the dying. Does it mean, I wonder, the end of all old days and nights for me in Paris, as the war that has shut fast the *Salon* door means the end



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of the old order of things in the Europe I have known? Shall I never go to Paris again in the season of lilacs and horse-chestnuts? Already I have ceased to meet my old friends by day in front of the picture of the year and to quarrel with them over it by night at a *café* table, or in the peaceful twilight of the suburban town and park and garden. Am I to lose as well the link with the past I had in the *Salon*, am I to lose perhaps Paris? Who can say at the moment of my writing, when the echo of shells and bullets is thundering in my ears? The pleasure of what has been becomes the dearer possession in the mad upheaval that threatens to sweep all trace of it away, and so I cling to the remembrance of my Paris nights the more tenderly and even with the hope, if far-fetched, that others may understand the tenderness. Youth sees little beyond youth, but as the years go on I begin to believe youth exists for no other end than to supply the incidents that age transforms into memories to warm itself by. If I have reached the time for looking back, I have my compensation in the invigorating glow, for all its sadness, that I get from my new occupation.





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